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**THE
HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT
IN
KERALA**

VOL. II

(1885 —1938)

By

Prof. P. K. K. MENON, M.A., M.Litt., L.T.,

Convener

**THE REGIONAL RECORDS SURVEY COMMITTEE
KERALA STATE
TRIVANDRUM**

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THE REGIONAL RECORDS SURVEY COMMITTEE

KERALA STATE

1. Sri P. K. Kurumakara Menon, M.A., M.Litt., L.T., *Convener*
Professor and Head of the Department of History,
University of Kerala, Trivandrum.
2. Sri P. S. Raghavan, M.A., *Member*
Principal,
Government Victoria College, Palghat.
3. Dr. V. K. Sukumaran Nair, M.A., Ph.D.,
Professor and Head of the Department of Politics, „
University of Kerala, Trivandrum.
4. Sri Suranad P. N. Kunjan Pillai, M.A.,
Chief Editor, Malayalam Lexicon, „
University of Kerala, Trivandrum.
5. Sri Elangulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, M.A., „
Emeritus Professor of Malayalam,
University College, Trivandrum.
6. Sri K. P. Pillai, B.A. (Oxon) „
Emeritus Professor of History,
University College, Trivandrum.
7. Sri P. S. Velayudhan, M.A., „
Principal, Maharaja's College,
Ernakulam.
8. Sri P. C. Joseph, M.A., „
Emeritus Principal,
C. M. S. College, Kottayam.
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Emeritus Principal,
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Palghat.
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11. Sri K. V. Krishna Iyer, M.A., L.T., „
Ramnagar, Coimbatore.
12. Sri Moothedathu Narayana Menon, „
Trichur.

PREFACE

This account of the Freedom Movement in Kerala, the second in the series, covering the period from 1885 to 1938, is primarily based on material collected from

(i) Files, bearing on Educational, Judicial and Political matters, preserved in the English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum.

(ii) Confidential Record of Administration, preserved in the Central Record Office, Ernakulam.

(iii) Records preserved in the Madras Record Office, Egmore, like Under Secretary's series, Confidential Newspaper Reports, Public Department Government Orders, etc.

(iv) Government publications such as Assembly and Council Proceedings, Administration Reports and booklets, preserved in the Legislature Library and the Public Library, Trivandrum.

(v) Numerous cuttings from Newspapers, some of which are now defunct, in English as well as Malayalam, preserved in the Confidential Files in the English Records, Kerala Secretariat, and in the Legislature Library, Trivandrum.

(vi) Old Files preserved in the important Newspaper offices in the State.

(vii) Reference books and Journals preserved in the University Library and Public Library, Trivandrum and some rare books, now out of print and available with private individuals and

(viii) Information supplied by responsible persons and active participants in the Freedom Movement.

It was no easy task to integrate the vast material into a whole connected narrative in view of the fact that Travancore, Cochin and Malabar constituted three distinct political entities during the period under review. They had local interests to pursue and local problems to solve, though of course they had common political aspirations and though developments in one region bound to produce corresponding reactions in another. Beyond the

cloud of specific issues of local complexion, none lost sight of the fundamental objectives of national freedom, political democracy and social equality. I have attempted in this volume to trace the stages of freedom struggle in Kerala on the background of developments in India.

It will be futile on my part to attempt to express my gratitude to those who had co-operated with me, in one way or another, in fulfilling the task of writing this volume. Let me formally record, at this juncture, my deep sense of gratitude to Mr P. K. Abdulla, I. A. S., Secretary for Education, Kerala Government, Trivandrum whose kind patronage and sympathetic encouragement have been a continuous source of inspiration to me. Sri. M. S. Rama Iyer who retired as Librarian of the Legislature Library, Trivandrum evinced very keen interest in the work and rendered all possible help to the Research Staff, which cannot remain unacknowledged. The authorities of the offices of the MALAYALI, MALAYALA MANORAMA, MATHRUBHUMI, MALAYALA RAJYAM and DEEPAM have placed me under a deep debt of obligation for having permitted the Research Staff to consult the old files of newspapers preserved by them. Considering the fact that the political party documents have been irrecoverably lost in the process of time their timely help has appreciably enabled me to fill certain gaps in the narrative. My thanks are also due to the various persons who gave me relevant information on several details whenever I approached them. The Kerala Secretariat Officers, particularly of the Department of Education, the Curator of the Madras Record Office and the Librarians of the Kerala University Library and the Trivandrum Public Library have been courteously helpful and I cannot sufficiently thank them.

Coming to closer quarters, the Members of the Regional Records Survey Committee had always readily extended to me their full co-operation and considerably lightened my task by their advice and kind suggestions offered from time to time. Mr. K. Mammen, M. A. and Mr. C. I. Gopala Pillai, M. A. had served the Committee until the middle of June, 1966 as Senior Research Assistant and Translator respectively and their learned guidance was of immense value. I gratefully record my deep sense of appreciation of the varied services rendered by them. Mr. K. Karunakaran Nair M. A., Research Assistant and at present Editor, 'Who is Who of Freedom Fighters' and

Mr. Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair, Regional Research Assistant for Malabar, have patiently borne the brunt of research work, in regard to the arduous collection of material and analysis of facts and consultations with them have been highly profitable to me. Messrs. G. Ramachandran Nair, K. N. Prabhakaran Pillai, E. E. Shamsuddin and R. Sasidharan Nair and Smt. T. Devaki Amma and Smt. E. Krishnamma have served the Committee in different ways in regard to routine official business and their conscientious work has facilitated the smooth running of the entire research project. I acknowledge, with deep pleasure and gratitude, the services rendered and the co-operation extended by all of them.

None will be more conscious than I of the limitations and possible deficiencies and faults of this volume. In the light of well instructed criticism, necessary changes will be made in later editions. Meanwhile I dedicate this volume to the soldiers of freedom, known and unknown, and place it, in all humility before the public for their kind approval.

P. K. KARUNAKARA MENON,

Convener.

Regional Records Survey Committee,

Kerala State.

Trivandrum,
18-7-1966.

INTRODUCTION

During the period covered by this volume Kerala continued to be divided into three distinct political entities, Malabar as part of the Madras Presidency and the Princely States of Cochin and Travancore. Even from the early days the leaders of political thought and social reformers evinced very keen interest in the affairs and progress of the Indian National Congress. Leaders like Messrs. C. Sankaran Nair, G. P. Pillai, V. Ryrum Nambiar, C. Kunhirama Menon, K. P. Achutha Menon, K. U. Narayana Menon, M. Krishnan Nair, C. Karunakara Menon, S. K. Nair, and Dr. T. M. Nair used to attend the annual sessions of the Congress. Among them, Mr. C. Sankaran Nair presided over the Congress session held at Amraoti in 1897.

In Travancore where considerations of caste seemed to fix the economic status of individuals much more than in the other two units, social consciousness was aroused early enough and the struggle for the recognition of social equality started. Mr. K. Ramakrishna Pillai, the fearless pioneer of journalistic activity in Kerala, mercilessly slashed the vagaries of administration and shaped critical public opinion. He stood alone and led no movement. In deference to the growing public demand some constitutional reforms were conceded resulting in the stabilisation of the Legislature. Progressive social legislation was effected. With the separate formation of the Devaswom Department the grievances in regard to the exclusion of the non-Hindus from the Revenue Department were allayed. The smooth but slow constitutional movement was, however, rudely ruffled in 1911 by the isolated episode of terrorism that victimised the Englishman, Mr. Ashe, the Collector of Tirunelveli. This unfortunate incident was typical of the cult of violence which was popular in certain circles in India at the time but which, fortunately, did not take root in the soil.

In Malabar the educated middle class and some representatives of the orthodox aristocratic class gently fostered the nationalist movement. The District Political Conferences held from time to time served to arouse public interest and stimulate nationalist thinking. Important men like the Zamorin of Calicut, the Senior Raja of Nilambur and the Raja of Kollengode played a leading role at some of these Political Conferences. At these gatherings was mooted the question of tenancy reform for the benefit of the agriculturists and petty land holders. Messrs K. P. Raman Menon, G. Sankaran Nair,

M. M. Kunhirama Menon and K. Madhavan Nair did not spare themselves in this task of harmonising the relations between the landlords and the tenants and paving the way for true economic freedom.

With the advent of Gandhiji on the scene the attitude of the Indian National Congress and the character of the struggle underwent a revolutionary change. The creed of non-violent non-co-operation attracted the middle-class intelligentsia. Students left off their classes, lawyers the courts of law. The Moplah Rebellion of 1921 with its economic background and communal complexion was still anti-British and anti-feudal at the same time.

The Indian National Congress paid attention, under Gandhiji's leadership, to constructive work also. Khadi work, *swadeshi*, Prohibition, the spread of Hindi, Harijan uplift and anti-untouchability campaign utilised the energies of enthusiastic workers. The down-trodden sections of the community realised their identity for the first time in the history of India. The famous Vaikom Satyagraha, the Suchindram Satyagraha and the Guruvayur Satyagraha opened the hearts and widened the vision of the orthodox high-caste Hindus and the cherished dreams of the progressive elements were fulfilled when the Maharaja of Travancore issued his famous Temple Entry Proclamation in November, 1936.

The visit of the Indian States Committee and the South Indian States People's Conference held at Trivandrum in 1929 made the subjects of Princely States conscious of the problem of responsible government. There had been so far no organised political movement in the Princely States as the leaders of the Indian National Congress were reluctant to meddle with their affairs. At the time of the proposals for the formation of an All-India federation including the democratic British Indian Provinces and the autocratic Princely States, the claims upon and the obligations to such a federation, on the part of Cochin and Travancore, had to be negotiated and fixed. But the federal part of the Government of India Act, 1935 remained a dead-letter.

The lack of adequate representation for the important communities like the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims in the Legislature of Travancore had been a perennial source of grievance. The constitutional reforms announced in 1932 failed to satisfy their political aspirations for proper reasons. This led to the Abstention Movement which, while giving expression to the legitimate demand of the excluded communities for a share in the administration, was yet communal in complexion. It was fortunately realised in course of time that communal bickerings would only serve to prolong the agony

of autocratic administration and the leaders pinned their political hopes to the Travancore State Congress that emerged, against this background, in 1938.

In Malabar meanwhile the Salt Satyagraha was inaugurated in 1930, as in other parts of India, and it gradually widened into the Civil Disobedience Movement which was suspended by Gandhiji in 1933. The question of Council entry was revived. The Indian National Congress contested the elections in the Madras Presidency, as elsewhere, conducted under the Government of India Act, 1935 and emerged with a substantial majority. In the first nationalist Ministry in Madras in 1937 a freedom fighter from Malabar was included.

The constitutional movement in Cochin was comparatively mild. The citizens of Cochin got their first dose of constitutional reform in 1920, based on the paternalistic principle of Governmental benevolence. The party system developed gradually. A new constitution was inaugurated in 1938, characterised by Dyarchy, already discredited in the British Indian Provinces. Cochin, however, was hailed as the first among the Princely States to have set the ball of responsible government rolling.

The British Government realised that the highly educated members of the middle class were the backbone of the freedom movement in Kerala, especially in Malabar. They therefore sought to repress and ruin them economically. The period following 1930 was indeed one of economic crisis, of global character, owing to a sharp fall in the prices of agricultural products. When the prices of paddy, coconut and pepper fell very low the average producer in Malabar found it extremely difficult even to pay land revenue and other taxes. His appeal to the Government for remission and reduction of the rate fell on deaf ears. It is instructive to note that the Government of Madras chose to enhance the land revenue and other taxes. Only after Mr. C. Rajagopalachari formed his Ministry in Madras in 1937 could the tenants and cultivators get any considerable relief.

The economic planning and achievements of the Soviet Union did not fail to attract the attention of the youth in Malabar. After 1934 some lethargy seems to have crept into the older generation in the Congress ranks who rested on their oars and thought of the prospects of Council entry. In a way they failed to cultivate the masses, except in terms of the impending elections. On this background arose the Congress Socialist Party. The thirties of this century saw the 'great schism'. It was the parting of the ways. The radicals turned away. A strike wave was felt everywhere and Trade Unionism and Youth Leagues were active.

The movement in Cochin and Travancore was for the realisation of responsible government and freedom from autocracy. The Dewan usually drawn from British Indian service, symbolised foreign imperialism and the movement directed against him tended to be anti-imperialist indirectly. The movement in the Princely States of Cochin and Travancore was primarily social and communal, with an ultimate political objective. In Malabar the movement was political and anti-imperialist, social work only underlining political work. Malabar was plunged in the cruel repression and came out of it, scathed but purified and determined all the more.

The study covered by this volume stops here. The movement until 1938 was essentially a middle class movement, *par excellence*. The middle class yearned for freedom from foreign yoke and for a social structure guaranteeing equality of economic opportunity. They suffered not in vain. Beyond the ring stood the masses, almost on the brink, anxious, excited and ready to jump into the vortex of the struggle.

CHAPTER I

PERIOD OF MEMORIALS

English education had been started in Travancore by foreign agencies as early as 1806 though it was only in 1834 that the State Government founded schools in Trivandrum and other places. The last quarter of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of an epoch of remarkable intellectual progress which synchronised with the rapid spread of English education. The new generation, under the impact of Western civilisation, came to have a broad social and political outlook. The people became independent in spirit and critical in their attitude.

The Act of 1892 can be considered to have inaugurated the policy of 'Association'. Indians got an opportunity to be associated with the Legislature on the combined principles of nomination and election, in 1892. They got the right of full, free and fair criticism while the Government also profited by getting an opportunity to answer it and remove misapprehension. The Congress movement, from 1885, "swept away all fungoid undergrowth and sweetened all political agitation by working it out in the wholesome light of the day".¹ The moderate nationalists of the earlier generation believed in the British sense of justice. The period, characterised by petitions, prayers and appeals, was one of "political mendicancy". The leaders of the age who possessed a sense of moderation awakened the national consciousness and gave the Indian people the rudiments of political education.

It is not surprising that, in this context, the educated sections in Travancore also became conscious of their rights and privileges. They demanded progressive association with the administration and submitted memorials to the Government for the redress of their grievances. They were convinced that they should have an increasing share in the administration to remove the prevalent social, political and economic inequality. To appreciate the nature of their grievances, it is necessary to have a clear idea of the constitutional relations between the Maharaja and the British Resident at that time.

It had been made clear to the Maharaja as early as 1860 that, in the administration of his territory, he should act through

1. Quoted in *British Rule in India and After* by R. R. Sethi and V. D. Mahajan, Page 283.

his Minister, the Dewan, to be chosen by him with the approval of the British Government". All orders were to be issued through the Dewan; there was to be no innovation upon established custom except on the advice of and instruction from the British Government. The Dewan would have free and direct access to the Resident and could communicate with him on matters regarding administration. The Maharaja was not to interfere with the course of justice in the established courts. No officer was to be removed from service so far as *'quam den bene se gesserit'*. All the charges against the officers were to be tried by a tribunal constituted with the concurrence of the Resident. The Resident, on his part, could place the charges of malversation brought to his notice before the Maharaja through the Dewan whereupon an investigation should be conducted to the Resident's satisfaction.

From the above, it would be clear that the British Resident, the man on the spot controlled more or less the entire administrative machinery and that the Dewan, more responsible and loyal to him than to the Maharaja, could with his support, exercise full authority, untrammelled by the ruler and unfettered by public opinion.

The significance of this constitutional position which transformed a head into a figure-head was not fully grasped by the people of Travancore who continued to associate their ruler, as in former times, with sovereignty for all intents and purposes. Their political consciousness had not yet risen to the necessary level which would have enabled them to understand the intricate character of the executive power, based on the system of checks and balances and vested in the Resident, the Maharaja and the Dewan, the weight of control however resting with the first. The Dewan, after all, was a member of the "fraternity" of the Resident; and the Maharaja was assigned practically the role of a constitutional monarch, in the limited sense of the term.

Until Col. Munro had combined in himself the functions of Resident and Dewan in Cochin and Travancore, the subjects of both the States used to be appointed to the public services. This practice underwent a change during the so called 'Rao period' in the history of Travancore, extending from 1817 to 1872. Those born and bred up in the State lost their chance to advise, guide and direct the policy of the rulers. The Rao Dewans coming from beyond the frontiers of the State were not familiar with the customs and traditions of the land nor did they have any permanent interest in it.

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2. Memo from Mr. Maltby dated 6th September 1860. File No. 2, Kerala Secretariat—political relation of Resident and Sirkar.
 3. No harm should be done to him as long as he behaves well.

The Mahratta Rao aristocracy dominated public life in Travancore and monopolised the highest posts and the ruler paid habitual deference to their opinions and sentiments. Of course in the interests of the political integration of India it was quite desirable that persons should be brought from outside the State to serve it, enabling thereby an exchange of ideas, experiences and sympathies. But unfortunately the Rao Dewans indulged in a continuous policy of nepotism or favouritism to the detriment of the legitimate aspirations and public interests of the subjects of the State at a time when the spread of Western education had already sharpened their vision and shaped their political ideas. Especially under some of them the problem assumed huge dimensions as they and their kinsmen practically stood between the Maharaja and his subjects and prevented the cries of the latter from reaching the ears of the former. The members of the local Nair community who by ancient custom constituted the bulwark of the Maharaja found themselves deprived of their military power and political influence at the court.

The Rao Dewans went to the extent of even disregarding the advice offered, from time to time, by the British Government against nepotism. As early as February, 1843, the Resident, Major General Cullen, had informed the Government of Travancore that he was opposed to the prevalent mode of distribution of patronage, "to the system which has occasionally obtained, of filling the cutcherry with friends and dependents".⁴ The Resident was requested by the Government of Madras⁵ to advise the Maharaja in filling a vacant situation to make his selection "from among the natives of respectability and rank". The Dewan did not translate this advice into action⁶, but persisted in his policy of nepotism, thereupon the Government of Madras asked the Resident to "intimate to the Dewan that the employment of his sons and relations in responsible offices in the Travancore State in which he himself is the chief functionary does

4. Minutes of Consultation, 2nd February, 1844. No. C. 16176, English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum.

5. Government Resolution dated 18th August, 1843.

6. The Dewan wrote to the Resident in November 1843 that the Travancore Government proposed that "The Deputy Police Shiristadar (his eldest son) be promoted to the vacant situation of Shiristadar..... also that the Dewan's eldest son be removed hereafter from the police in the event of any change in the judicial department.....second son be appointed to the vacant situation of Mahratta Shiristadar in his cutcherry". (No. C 16176, English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum).

not accord with the views entertained by Government for maintaining the efficient administration of that Circar⁷. Several individuals brought from outside^a did not have the qualification necessary to make their administration successful. They rode rough-shod over the claims of the subjects of the State and their patrons, the Rao Dewans, continued their autocratic administration. Petted and pampered at the expense of the State, the new bureaucracy constituted a clique that shut out indigenous talent from the public services.

The state of administration in Travancore at this time is found described in a letter^s addressed to Lord Connemara, Governor of Madras, on the occasion of his visit to Travancoreⁿ in 1887. It is stated therein that the administration in Travancore, "the garden of South India", "has been drifting from bad to worse, and day after day", the yoke of oppression being pressed on the people with greater force than ever before. The general discontent was such that the native lost "all lingering reliance on the specious professions of the Maharaja on his Coronation Day, and all faith and belief in either the justice or good intentions of his Government". As for the Maharaja, Rama Varma, who became the ruler on 19 August, 1885, he was affable, benevolent and of a generous temper and conciliatory disposition; and as a prince he had given the people "the bright promise of the future", but the "golden bowl of hope was rudely dashed from their lips to be broken at their feet".

7. *Ibid.*

- 7a. Even during the days of no less a person than Sir Madhava Rao, a Dewan of ability and high attainments, who was responsible for the progress of the State on modern lines the scandal of nepotism reached its climax so much so that on 10th July, 1863, Mr. W. Fisher, the British Resident called, in a letter, his attention to an article in the *Athenaeum* containing some allegations against the Dewan and warned him that "should you not be more careful and evince a disinterestedness in the discharge of your office the Government will be constrained to recommend your immediate dismissal" (No. 1101). The letter was enough to voilently "shake the old native statesman in his elevated seat".
8. The contents are found in an old pamphlet of 1887 (now out of print) which was edited for a second time to meet the great demand for it in India and to give it wider circulation by distribution among the Members of both Houses of Parliament in England. Extracts from several articles that appeared in newspapers at that time were incorporated in the Appendix of the second edition.
9. Travancore is referred to as the epitome of India, inhabited by 397 castes of people, speaking 20 different languages, embracing 10 different religions and following 1058 different occupations. It owed its prosperity to the two predecessors of the ruler and their able administrators.

The Maharaja had become a tool in the hands of Anantaramier¹⁰, better known as *Saravanai*, in whose presence "the mind of the Maharaja is a blank and his arms are powerless", and in the sunshine of whose smiles the highest officers of the State basked. He was, the letter alleged, committing a number of official irregularities, of which specific instances were quoted by it. The letter practically accused him of having usurped the functions of the Maharaja and interfered in the administration of the State to its disadvantage. If Travancore had a Dewan who, without enslaving his conscience to others, would act with the freedom, strength and dignity of one "whose highest law is in his own breast" and who would confide "with a sublime constancy in justice and virtue as the only foundation of a wise policy and public prosperity", the State would have told a different tale, but the Maharaja invested Mr. Rama Rao, "a man of average education and mediocre abilities", with the insignia of authority of the Dewan. Mr. Rama Rao was playing second fiddle to *Saravanai* in a servile manner and accumulating "in his own person, relations and friends, a number of lucrative appointments in the kingdom", while several leaders of associations, purely social and not even distantly political, were being transferred from their sphere of influence.

The letter next alleged that Mr. Watts¹¹, the Dewan's Chief Secretary, who had already served under five Dewans of Travancore (and who seemed to go on for ever in spite of a change in the Dewans), was utilizing his great influence "for purposes of self gratification".

The odium attached to the "systematic misgovernment" was also shared, according to the letter, by Mr. Hannington, the British Resident, whom it accused of conniving at the abuses in administration, "without correcting errors, obviating failures, regulating justice". His indifference was ascribed to the fact that he had been permitted

10. He began his career on a rupee and a half *per mensem*, became Palace Manager and subsequently Fouzdary Commissioner, with power to approve and confirm the sentence of death passed on criminals by the highest tribunal of justice in the kingdom.
11. He is described as a person "going through a series of adventures, some momentarily pleasant, others nearly fatal, now emerging from obscurity, now thrown back into shade, now elbowing through a crowd, now standing alone.....assuming various forms and shapes, clinging like the chameleon, adopting himself to time, place and occasion and coming out at last unscathed and all the better for his adventures".

to continue as the Resident in Travancore for more than five years,¹² without special reasons, which fact made him sacrifice "duty at the altar of personal comfort and enjoyment"¹³.

On the whole, the "imbecility of the sovereign, the incapacity of the Prime Minister and the inactivity of the Political Agent have converted the people of Travancore into an appurtenance, made them the footstool of the royal favourite, the scorn of Cochin and the commiseration of the Indian Empire". The letter called upon the Governor of Madras to expel *Saravananai* from Travancore, effect the retirement of Mr. Rama Rao, remove Mr. Watts from his position and recall Mr. Hannington. "Though they cannot boast of having among them, a Madame Roland to weep at nine years of age that she was not born a Roman citizen, or a band of patriots like the Irish, to fight for the rights of their land tooth and nail, the great majority of them (Travancoreans) love their country....." and so would call upon Lord Connemara to exercise the authority vested in him, as Governor of Madras, by the Treaty of 1809.

The general complaint was that the Nair section of the population was being subjected to humiliation, the State tightening the cord round the neck of its members by denying them proper remuneration and keeping them from a "proportionate share" in the administration. The Syrian Christian and other communities too were practically shut out from State patronage. The *Travancore Malayali Sabha* was conducting an agitation to find a remedy to this problem on account of which its prominent members were subjected to careful scrutiny by the Dewan and his henchmen. They felt that the Maharaja was not showing the degree of firmness, discernment and dignity which a policy of non-interference, on the part of the British

12. From 1800 onwards until 1887 there had been twenty-two Residents in Travancore excluding Mr. Hannington. Of them, three remained only for six months each, six for a year each, five for two years each, five for five years each, one for nine years, one for ten and one for twenty years. Col. Macaulay and Col. Munro had continued for a very long time in the State for special reasons. General Cullen who too had continued for more than five years, behaved like Mr. Hannington, shielding the Dewan against "newspaper writers, missionaries petitioners, sober well-wishers of the State and even the Madras Government itself".

13. The Resident's "duty is to represent the majesty of the sovereign power, to keep a watchful eye upon abuses and to encourage reforms No position in India requires more delicate management than his. From the prosperity of the State he can gain little credit; for its misgovernment he must always be partially responsible". Cotton and Payne: *India and the Colonies*.

Government, recommended and adopted in respect to Travancore, had expected of him. It was demanded that the British should interfere in a "gentle yet prompt, general yet telling" manner because nothing is "more dangerous than to be a Wellington in Politics, a politician half ice, half fire".¹⁴

The contents of the letter addressed to the Governor of Madras in 1887 have been referred to above in detail because it was a prelude to the famous *Malayali Memorial* of 1891, the first of the series of representations to be submitted to the authorities by the people of Travancore for effecting constitutional and administrative reforms and securing civic and political liberty. It was, more or less, an impeachment and a petition of right rolled into one.

Looking at the problem from an all-India stand-point we find that the agitation for adequate representation for Indians in the public services was an important phase in the march towards equality of economic opportunity which preceded the agitation for *swaraj*. There had been persistent complaints that the British did not extend a fair deal to the Indians in the matter of distribution of patronage. The Indian National Congress at its first session appointed a special committee under the presidency of Dadabhai Naoroji to consider and report on the issue of public services. They submitted their report to the second session of the Congress on 30 December, 1886 recommending the simultaneous holding of competitive public service examinations both in India and England. The Public Service Commission created in 1886 for devising a scheme to do full justice to the claims of Indians to higher and more extensive employment in the public services reported in 1892 against such simultaneous examinations. This was the signal for a general agitation for political and economic equality of opportunity. Gokhale denounced this report at the Allahabad session of the Congress in 1892.

It may thus be seen that the Indian National Congress evinced, from its inception, very keen interest in the Indianisation of the services. Under the stimulus of these efforts, the awakened leaders in the Princely States determined to end the preponderance, in the public services, of vested interests, protected though not blessed by the British Resident as in Travancore. By temperament and training, Sri Mulam Tirunal Maharaja (1885-1924) believed in broadening popular freedom and enlisting public support and he wanted Travancoreans to play a greater role in the administration than in the past; but the Dewan, Mr. Rama Rao (1887-1892) stooped apparently to the level of favouritism, safeguarding the interests of his

14. A Letter Addressed to the Governor of Madras on the Affairs of Travancore, Introduction, Second Edition, 1887.

kinsfolk and trying to ruin the prospect of individual officers.¹⁵ It was natural under these conditions for the educated young generation in Travancore, inspired by the passion for freedom, to make an attempt, on constitutional lines, for the redress of their grievances regarding their participation in the general administration. They adopted the procedure, specially characteristic of that period, of submitting a memorial to the Maharaja for, after all, they could not be permanently condemned to the position of hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The popular agitation first took the shape of what came to be known as the "Travancore Memorial" or the "Malayali Memorial" of 1891. The memorial was drafted by Mr. K. P. Sankara Menon, of the Madras Bar, who subsequently played an active role in the Indian National Congress. Dr. Palpu, Mr. G. Parameswaran Pillai and others. Its copies were circulated in Travancore and more than ten thousand signatures obtained. It was presented to the Maharaja on 11 January, 1891. The petitioners, as they were called by the Dewan, Rama Rao, demanded protection for the political rights of the people of Travancore. The submission of the memorial marks the awakening, for the first time, of the educated sections in the State, headed by University graduates. It reflected the political aspirations of the leading communities—Nair, Ezhava, Nambudiri, Latin Christian, Syrian Christian and Anglo-Indian. The Government, for the first time, realised that the voice of the people was a power to be reckoned with.

The Malayali Memorial¹⁶ demanded the recognition of the right of Travancoreans to hold public offices in the State, the right being confined to the members of those families who were domiciled in Travancore for not less than three generations. The appointments to offices requiring no special qualification were to be reserved for Travancoreans, those outside the State being brought in only with the special permission of the Maharaja. All appointments to offices to be graded and classified, were to be so made as to maintain the equality of numbers in proportion to the qualified hands available at the time in each community; if necessary, the British Government might be requested to lend the services of qualified hands for prescribed periods. Officers were to be removed from service only according to Rules and Regulations and the Civil List was to be published once in three months. Travancoreans should be deputed to British India to receive proper administrative training for appointment in the State.

15. G. P. Pillai, *Travancore for Travancoreans*.

16. *Malayala Manorama* dated 11th July, 1891.

The main object of the Malayali Memorial was to impress on the Maharaja the gross injustice involved in the denial to Travancoreans of a fair share in the administration and in their systematic exclusion from the higher grades of service so far as the existing system of distribution of patronage in the State was based on nepotism and favouritism. The memorialists quoted chapter and verse and furnished relevant facts and figures¹⁷ in support of their contention. They argued that though Travancore had a higher percentage of literacy than Malabar, the natives of the latter, then under the British, were in an advantageous position in the matter of recruitment to the public services, in contrast to those in the State. They demanded preferential treatment for the natives of Travancore, irrespective of "class, caste or creed". This suggestion, they believed, would not only enable more natives to serve the land than ever before but also remove that stigma of degradation and degeneration with which they were threatened.

The Malayali Memorial was commented on and in general supported by the press in Travancore and outside. Public opinion for some time was focussed on the issues raised by it. The *Malayala Manorama* warned that it "is likely that irremediable losses might happen to the State out of the internal dissension gradually if the various communities in the State are not given due share in the services proportionate to the population of the several communities"¹⁸.

No political movement, however just or reasonable, can hope to be completely successful if it is not adequately reinforced by public opinion. The active propaganda kept up by the newspapers produced some results desired by the memorialists¹⁹. Some of

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17. There is not a single Malayali drawing more than Rs 500 per month; only two received more than Rs 300 each. Though intelligent and educated men were not wanting among the members of the Ezhava community, not one of them held any appointment carrying a salary of Rs 5 or more.
 18. According to the Travancore Almanac of 1879 there were 3407 Government jobs on Rs 10 and above in the whole State. They were distributed among the communities in the following manner:—Malayala Shudras, 1575; Nanjanad Shudras 75; Nazranis 76; Ezhavas 0; Other Castes 0. Even in the group of 246 Government jobs carrying a monthly salary of Rs 50 and above, Ezhavas etc., did not find a place. There was no Travancorean among the judges of High Court or among the Dewan Peshkars of the State. (*Malayala Manorama*, dated 24th January, 1891.)
 19. It is however interesting to note that there was a counter-memorial produced by Mr. E. Rama Aiyer of Quilon who refuted the arguments of the Malayali Memorial.

the European officers in the State sympathised with the agitation and gave it proper guidance. Even before waiting on the Dewan and the Maharaja the deputationists had to strengthen their position by eliciting the whole-hearted support of the people²⁰. Mr. G. Parameswaran Pillai, then only twenty-seven, was the soul of the movement and he organised a series of political meetings²¹, to win popular favour. There was systematic political campaigning unprecedented in the annals of Travancore.

The Government's reply²² to the memorialists was expressive of the Dewan's autocratic inclinations. While promising to accord "preferment to people of the classes referred to in the memorial according to the requirements of the public service and the circumstances of the country" the Dewan stated that the central argument of the memorialists was a "fallacy" so far as the number of Malayali graduates emerging from the portals of the University was comparatively small. He was evidently shutting his eye before the fact that among those who signed the memorial there were at least fifty unemployed graduates. He added that as regards the Ezhavas who were "imported into the memorial".

20. He became a prominent member of the Indian National Congress from 1894 onwards and was one of its Secretaries at its Madras session. He played a prominent role at its Poona session, in 1895, as well as at the Calcutta session in 1896. In 1898 also he was elected as one of the Secretaries of the Congress. He focussed the public attention on the grievances of the Indian community in South Africa and extended all support to Gandhiji when he visited India in 1896 demanding justice for them. He expired on 21st May, 1903. It is to his credit that he transformed the subject, governed by the State into a citizen conscious of his rights.

21. The public meetings were held at North Parur, Kottayam, Alleppey, Quilon, Trivandrum and Nagercoil presided over by Rev. Father Hilarion, Vicar of the Parur Church, Right Rev. Mar Athanasius, the Metropolitan of the Syrian Church, Kumaramangalath Nilakantan Nambudiripad; Mr. Kavalan Nilakanta Pillai, Mr. T. F. Lloyd an Anglo-Indian and Mr. S. Sivan Pillai respectively. The leaders drew the attention of the listeners to the arbitrary features of administration. Later, on 3rd June, 1891 there was also a conference at Kottayam to examine the contents of the memorial attended by Mr. Varghese Mappilai, Mani Kathanar, Vayaskara Moose, Mr. G. Parameswaran Pillai and other leaders of the various communities.

Malayala Manorama, 4th July, 1891. Also the Father of Political Agitation in Travancore: G. Parameswaran Pillai by "Keraleeyan" Page 19.

22. Government's Endorsement over Dewan Rama Rao's signature dated 21 April, 1891, No. 1899/M. 884.

they were, as a body, "uneducated, preferring their own occupations to going in for such education as would fit these for the public service"²³ and their social position was such that they could be scarcely eligible for public offices "where a certain amount of respect is to be commanded". He confessed that he could not do much in a State where the Hindus were conservative and superstitious and that "any radical measure on the part of Government in which the bulk of the population does not acquiesce is not only not likely to be productive of good but will rather retard progress by developing race antagonism calculated to do much mischief"²⁴. He advised the memorialists to assist the Government by instilling into the minds of the people the liberal principles which they had acquired by their advanced education and assured them that after the lower classes woke up from the lethargy of centuries and rose in the scale the Government would be in a position to give the "meritorious members" of such classes a share in the administration. He also pointed out that the educated people in the Syrian Christian community had been increasingly employed in the different administrative departments.

On the whole the essence of the Dewan's reply was a denial of the complaint made in the Malayali Memorial. Anyway the Maharaja commanded the Dewan to meet a small deputation from the petitioners, not exceeding six in number, to discuss any plan that they might lay before the Government "to advance their interests in every legitimate way".

The Malayali Memorial is an important landmark in the political awakening of the people, a beacon for mightier movements in later days aimed at the attainment of civic rights and responsible government. It provided a model in the method of political campaigning for marshalling public sympathy. The memorial was sponsored by all sections of the people in the State and the public meetings organised by the memorialists were presided over by the leading members of the different communities. It was the first assertion of the public right of participation in administration, irrespective of class or creed. Politically it was directed against the autocratic representative of the Paramount Power in the State who had been accused of playing ducks with patronage. The Malayali Memorial exemplified the fundamental right of the citizens to petition the sovereign for the redress of their grievances and indicated something more than the scramble for the fishes and loaves of office. Apart from its results, it tied the members of the

23. Government's Endorsement over Dewan Rama Rao's signature dated 21st April, 1891. No. 1899/M. 884.

24. *Ibid.*

different communities to a common objective and generated the spirit of nationalism among the educated upper sections of the population. As Tilak wrote in 1885, "We are at present gradually being inspired by the spirit of patriotism. The birth of patriotism among us is due to English rule and English education.....It is only those who have come under the influence of English education and begun to realise the defects of British administration that have been inspired by that spirit". We may therefore add that at this time the rural areas in Travancore did not have much of political awakening and the lower strata of society continued to remain under feudal conditions.

The Malayali Memorial of 1891 had been a joint venture, as noted above, on the part of the various communities in the State. While generally dealing with the meagre representation accorded to the different communities, the memorialists had particularly referred to the neglect of the Ezhavas in State patronage. The Ezhavas were naturally much disappointed in failing to derive any benefit from the Government as a result of the memorial. Dr. Palpu ²⁵ of Pettah, who was the first graduate in Medicine among the Ezhavas and who was in Mysore Medical Service, then organised the Travancore Ezhava Sabha to carry on a systematic agitation but the movement was not successful. He as well as other Ezhava leaders who had signed the Malayali Memorial of 1891 waited in vain for six years for a healthy change in the policy of the Government. The Ezhava sabha made arrangements in 1896 for the submission of another memorial, ²⁶ Learning 13176 signatures to the Maharaja, inviting the attention of the Government to the disabilities from which the Ezhava community in Travancore suffered regarding the appointment to the offices under the Government according to their qualification and the admission of their children into Government schools.

It was contended that the Ezhavas of Travancore numbered nearly half a million, constituting the second community in the State in point of numerical importance. Noted for their industry and perseverance, they were, as the author of the Travancore Census Report remarks a healthy and hard-working community contri-

25. Dr. Palpu is said to have told Swami Vivekananda of the evils of caste system in Kerala when the latter stated that "Kerala is a lunatic asylum where the devilish caste system prevails in its extreme form".
26. There were in fact two memorials. The first one was submitted to the Dewan on 13th May, 1895 and the second to the Maharaja in 1896. The Government's reply to the second memorial styled the Ezhava Memorial was dated 31st October, 1896.

buting considerably to the revenues of the State; but unfortunately public service, the strongest incentive to education, was denied to them in Travancore even in its lowest categories, unless they would become converts to Islam or Christianity. Their lot was in contrast to that of the Tiyas of British Malabar who were privileged to improve their condition like any other section in society. It was evident that the Ezhava community was not indifferent to education for in spite of lack of any kind of inducement from the Government the percentage of its educated members rose from 3.15 in 1875 to 12.10 in 1891. Several English schools in the State, especially in the *malassil*, continued to be closed to the Ezhavas so much so that there were only two or three dozens who were returned in 1891 as "English literates," they also received little encouragement at the hands of the Government. If their services had been engaged by the Government, it might have created aspirations in the community favourable to the further spread of English education. Dewan Rama Rao was not charitable when he accused the Ezhava community of being uneducated²⁷, having denied the necessary facilities for improvement to its members. It was strange that while elsewhere merit was the criterion for recruitment to the public service, in Travancore the denial of appointment to the Ezhavas was ascribed to their low social position though none was prepared to define the standard social position. Under a liberal Government any community, however backward, was bound to utilise every opportunity for advancement. It was anomalous that better treatment was accorded by the Government to converts to other religions in the matter of appointments so far as by such concession a man's social position could not be raised suddenly. It was also false to state, Dr. Palpu contended, that public opinion was against the Ezhavas in Travancore where the society was largely reactionary and superstitious. Even if the argument were true, the duty of an enlightened Government would certainly be to discountenance such prejudices. After all the "ten thousand educated Nairs" would not have signed the Malayali Memorial of 1891 if they had been inimical to their less fortunate Ezhava brothers. If Stamp Act could be passed and school fees raised against public opinion, it was the duty of the Government as a matter of public necessity to remove the disabilities of the Ezhavas even when "public opinion" might

27. "There are only two of that class" Dewan Rama Rao had stated "that have graduated in the local University and very few indeed if any, who are seeking a high education in the local college". Dr. Palpu's contention was that even the educated few received little encouragement at the hands of the Government. The first graduate from the Ezhava community who took his degree in Arts as early as 1882 had to seek employment elsewhere; similar was the case with the "first Travancore Malayali Hindu that graduated in Medicine".

be against such an innovation. Dr. Palpu added that "times have changed and with it their surroundings have altered their position, while they have been forced to remain, as they were, centuries ago. They have to move with the times as well as other classes and adapt themselves to their altered surroundings". So in the first place all Government schools should be thrown open to the Ezhavas in a manner consistent with the repeated Proclamations²⁸ of the rulers that "all classes, without distinction of caste or creed, may have access to public institutions"; secondly the Ezhavas should be entertained in Government service as otherwise the educated individuals of the community would have to seek official career elsewhere making the country the poorer for it.

The Government's reply to the Ezhava Memorial endorsed by the Dewan was given on 31st October 1896 and it reflected their traditional reactionary attitude. They said that any revolutionary change in the existing social order would engender caste antagonism which would not only arrest the social progress but do violence to communal harmony. Several important Government institutions had been thrown open to the Ezhavas in common with other classes and "wherever possible new schools would be thrown open to them". Any attempt to force all classes into common schools would be futile and productive of undesirable consequences. The Government was of the view that separate caste schools should be established and as regards the admission of the Ezhavas into public service they had already "made a departure in their favour" which would meet their aspirations under the existing conditions.

On 19 July 1897 Mr. Herbert Roberts raised in the British Parliament the question of Ezhava disabilities in Travancore and the remedial steps adopted by the Government of Madras²⁹. The Secretary of State replied that eight percent of the total number of the pupils in the State was constituted by Ezhava children. The Dewan had informed the Government of Madras that as the Ezhavas themselves had not been free from social scruples, separate institutions were provided for lower orders. The Dewan added that the agitation was more from without than from within the country from a few persons whose clamour for change had yet to harmonise with the prevailing sentiment in respect of the existing order of things. But the Government of Madras was against such separate caste schools and as early as 1870, they had deprecated such a policy as retrograde tending "to sanction and ratify the righteousness of caste

28. C. 1231, English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum. See No 4591/G. 3071 dated 31-10-1896.

29. Ibid.

feelings"³⁰. No Government worth the name should exclude the large classes of contributors to the revenues from the institutions maintained out of public funds.

Obviously the Dewan's policy was one of "divide and rule". The Nair community was not opposed to the claims of the Ezhavas and both the communities had joined together along with others in the submission of the Memorial of 1891 to the Government. When the Government referred to the possibility of communal antagonism that would result from the establishment of public schools, they were setting one class against the other in order to preserve intact the existing monopoly of the ruling class in the services. The Government's reply was the aim and of the wedge driven to prevent communal solidarity. Dr. Palpu himself was aware of this snare and as he stated in the memorial, "When the two most numerous classes in the State, viz., the Nairs and the Tiyas, have learnt to recognise the claims of each other and asked for a due share in the service of the State Government have pointed out the former as being opposed to the interests of the latter". He exploded the myth of Nair opposition and asserted that the memorial of 1891 "showed unmistakably that the other classes were in sympathy with the Tiyas".

The impervious policy of the Dewan was incapable of infusing a feeling of security into the minds of the lower segment of the population. The Ezhavas made use of Lord Curzon's visit to Travancore in 1900 to request him to take steps for the redress of their educational and political grievances. On their behalf a memorial was presented to Lord Curzon, accompanied by a brochure entitled 'Treatment of Ezhavas in Travancore'. This memorial came to be known as the 'Ezhava Memorial of 1900'. The pamphlet described the plethora of disabilities to which an industrious and otherwise prosperous community constituting a fifth of the entire population was subjected by the Government of Travancore. The memorialists prayed "Your Excellency may be pleased to peruse the same (pamphlet) at leisure and take such action in the matter as Your Excellency may on such perusal deem fit".

The memorialists got an immediate reply to the effect that the Viceroy would not "interfere in minor details of local administration" and that Travancore was "a native State under protection". The constitutional conventions governing the relations between the Paramount Power and the princely States fettered his hands though he was sympathetic towards the memorialists. In his banquet speech he indirectly referred to the point at issue when he stated that "in the history of States no rulers are more esteemed by posterity than those who have risen superior to the trammels of bigotry and exclusiveness and have dealt equal mercy and justice to all

30. Proceedings of the Government of Madras, 23rd April, 1870.

classes including the humblest of their people". Lord Curzon forwarded the memorial to the Madras Government and the Resident for necessary action.

The press supported the cause of the Ezhavas. In a powerful editorial³¹ the *Malayali* said "what we are obliged to bring to the public notice is the utter indifference which the Dewans of Travancore and the Madras Government have been and are showing in this matter to the half a million out of the two and a half million in Travancore. The two distinct grievances are non-admission into all Government schools and non-admission into all Government services".

The Malayali Memorial of 1891 and the Ezhava Memorials of 1896 and 1900 produced, to the disappointment of their sponsors, no considerable positive result immediately. The spectre of communal discord was the argument trotted out by the Dewan in defence of firm-rooted conservatism and strict adherence to the time-honoured social traditions. The denial of admission to the services which at the time constituted a powerful incentive to western education compelled the lower sections of the community to remain in a state of protracted intellectual torpor. Anyway the agitations brought all the communities to a common platform and drew attention of the public, both inside and outside the State, to the political disabilities of the people and the apathy of the Dewan. The copies of the memorial were circulated throughout India and in certain sympathetic and influential quarters in England as well. The weight of criticism appearing in the English newspapers in British India opened the eyes of the authorities in Travancore but the action taken by them was very slow and gradual.

It was these early efforts that laid the foundations of the subsequent and more widespread agitations for the recognition of fundamental rights. For nearly half a century from the date of the Malayali Memorial, the country witnessed agitation by one community after another, the abstention movement making a high point of united popular agitation, until in 1935 a Public Service Commission was appointed and the principle of communal rotation, tantamount to reservation in the recruitment to the public services, was accepted. With the promulgation of the Temple Entry Proclamation in November 1936 most of the glaring social disabilities were removed once for all. Just as nationalism, if properly interpreted may be considered as a stepping-stone to internationalism, so too communalism in the State represented a historical stage in the evolution towards a sense of nationalism. It denoted the eagerness of all the communities to have a legitimate share in the powers and responsibilities of administration.

31. The *Malayali* dated 23rd February, 1901.

CHAPTER 2

A JOURNALIST'S MARTYRDOM

An important factor that contributed in no small measure to the general political awakening of the people and the shaping of public opinion in Kerala was, as in other regions, the rise of newspapers. The *Malayala Manorama*, the *Malayali*, the *Parasuraman*, the *Western Star*, the *Nazrani Deepika* and the *Kerala Taraka* in Travancore, the *Satyanadam* in Cochin, and the *Kerala Patrika* in Malabar stimulated the political education of the people and developed in them a critical attitude towards the arbitrary features of Government and the prevalent evils of society. Mr. C. Kunhirama Menon at Calicut and Mr. Varghese Mappillay at Kottayam in Travancore were the two pioneers in the field of Malayalam journalism, who raised its standard to a very high level. Fearless, independent, and of an unsullied character, Mr. Kunhirama Menon wielded a powerful pen. A dispassionate judge of men and things, an ardent patriot and eminent scholar, he never hesitated to criticise and clash with the Government. The *Malayala Manorama* at Kottayam devoted its attention in those days mainly to social and literary affairs. In fact a large majority of the newspapers had no 'politics'; some among them championed the cause of the depressed classes.

Mr. K. Ramakrishna Pillai, one of the foremost journalists of Kerala, occupied indeed a unique position in those days as a fighter for the freedom of the press. Fearless and upright, his powerful pen mercilessly slashed corruption, nepotism and autocracy in Travancore. He adopted journalism as his profession on 14 September, 1899, assuming charge as Editor of the *Kerala Darpanam*. In those days journalism was not lucrative and attracted few. Mr. Pillai's first Editorial in *Kerala Darpanam* stated: "Those who observe carefully the ways of the Malayalam press will realise that the Editors have no clear idea of the duties and responsibilities of an Editor¹. His aim was to make the people conscious of their civic rights and responsibilities, and contribute to the intellectual advancement of contemporary society. On 22 April, 1901 he became the Editor² of *Kerala Panchika* and in August 1903, of the *Malayali*. He had already earned fame under his pen-name, *Keralan*. He began

1. Editorial, *Kerala Darpanam*, 14th September, 1899.

2. The *Kerala Panchika* took shape when the two newspapers, *Kerala Darpanam* and *Vanchibhoo Panchika*, came to be combined under the same management.

to publish a series of articles on political themes which attracted the attention of the people and the Government. His criticism of the vagaries of administration offended the loyalist members of the Board of Management of the *Malayali* and he was compelled to resign in November, 1904. At this juncture, Abdul Khader Moulavi of Vakkom, a leader of the Muslim community, invited Mr. Pillai to be the Editor of his paper, *Swadesabhimani* published from Anjengo (and later from Vakkom) on the assurance that he would have unrestricted freedom to express his own views. Mr. Pillai accepted the invitation and assumed the Editorship on 17 January, 1906.

The *Swadesabhimani* soon came into conflict with the Government of Travancore when it began to criticise the actions of some of the Maharaja's favourites and allege the existence of corruption in the Palace which, Mr. Pillai pointed out, had demoralised the people and become a menace to the State.³ Such attack on the Palace could not continue for long with impunity. He next began to attack the unconventional ways of Mr. P. Rajagopalachari who took charge as Dewan of the State on 24 October, 1907. He criticised⁴ the Government's policy in the so-called Chalai Riot Case⁵ and stated that the Dewan ought not to have characterised it as a serious riot or given his own version of its causes or consequence when the matter was *sub judice* and when the State itself was the complainant. He

3. Editorial on 22nd May, 1907.

4. *Ibid*, 6th June, 1909.

5. The merchants at Chalai Bazaar were often troubled by the police and they submitted a memorial to the Government to remedy their distress. Getting no reply they closed the shops in protest and went in procession to the Palace. Faced by the police, the excited people stoned them and set fire to the police station. The demonstrators were finally suppressed with military help. The incident happened in 1908.

On 3-12-1910 the *Kerala Patrika* reported news of a rumour that Mr. Pachu Pillai, who caused the Chalai Riots and was undergoing imprisonment as sentenced by the judicial court, would be released and reinstated in service with arrears of pay. If he was released under the royal prerogative of mercy, the paper asked, how he could claim the arrears of pay. After all, the Executive had no authority over the High Court. If the Maharaja or the British Resident had invested Mr. Rajagopalachari's Government with such an extra-ordinary power, the fact should have been published for the benefit of the public.

The High Court was of the view that the police officer, responsible for falsifying evidence, should be prosecuted. The *Swadesabhimani* wrote on 6th June, 1909 an Editorial on the Chalai Riots. The officers concerned were adequately punished though the Sessions Judge was made a Dewan Peishkar.

added that under other circumstances the Dewan's statement would have amounted to contempt of the court and he expressed the hope that the judiciary, without being influenced by it, would safeguard the interests of the accused.

The Dewan's suppression of the agitation for representative government and his continued practice of nominating members to the Popular Assembly according to his likes were strongly opposed by the people. Mr. Ramakrishna Pillai was elected unopposed from the Neyyattinkarai Taluk to the Popular Assembly but his election, as much as that of Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai who was elected from the Changanacherry constituency, was nullified by executive action on the ground that he was not a local resident. The *Swadesabhimani* denounced the new rules enacted by the Dewan.⁶ The citizens of Neyyattinkarai protested against the removal of their elected representative and refused to send another in his place, as did the people of Middlesex in England in 1767. The *Swadesabhimani* also severely reprimanded the Dewan for his failure to root out official corruption.⁷

The Dewan took immediate steps to enact a rigorous Press Regulation to stifle criticism. He decided to deport Mr. Ramakrishna Pillai from the State. On 26 September 1910 by a Royal Proclamation,⁸ the *Swadesabhimani* was suppressed, its Editor banished from the State and the press confiscated to the Government. The Proclamation denied Mr. Ramakrishna Pillai the elementary right of resort to a civil court for the redress of his grievances.

6. Editorial on 22nd May, 1907.

7. *Ibid*, 6th June, 1909.

8. The Proclamation said: "Whereas We are satisfied that in the public interest the newspaper 'Swadesabhimani' published at Trivandrum should be suppressed and its Managing Proprietor and Editor K. Ramakrishna Pillai removed from our territory, we are hereby pleased to command that the aforesaid K. Ramakrishna Pillai shall be forthwith arrested and taken beyond the limits of our State and that the aforesaid K. Ramakrishna Pillai shall not be allowed to return to or to enter our State until and unless We are pleased to command otherwise. We are also pleased to command that all issues of the newspaper 'Swadesabhimani' wherever found and also the printing press at which the said newspaper has been printed with all accessories and appurtenances shall be forfeited to our Government. We are further pleased to command that no action, civil or criminal, shall lie against our Government or any officer of our Government for any act done or purporting to be done in pursuance or under the authority of our commands herein contained". (Gazette Extraordinary).

The sensational news came unexpectedly and spread like wild fire and people collected in large numbers before the police station at Trivandrum. The copies of the journals, *Sharada*, *Vidyarthi* and *Keralan* along with several books kept for sale were taken from the press. Mr. Pillai was taken in a carriage suited to his respectable status in society. He was not in the least shaken by the unhappy events but remained sedate⁹. Going out of the State, he reached Madras after a short stay at Tirunelveli and Tiruchirappalli.

This was the first instance of the deportation of an Editor from his place of birth and work without any reason being given for the cruel punishment. The unique martyrdom of Mr. Pillai and the sufferings of his family sanctified the cause of fearless and independent journalism. The action of the Government was denounced by every section of public opinion in the country. The leading newspapers hailed him as a hero and condemned the Government.¹⁰

Kerala Sanchari dated 19th October, 1910.

The *Kerala Patrika* said that the deportation sullied the good name of Travancore for the Government did not answer the allegations levelled against it or publish satisfactory reasons for the drastic course of action. If the allegations were false, the proper course would have been to hand him over to a court of law; the action taken was one of cowardice. (Calicut, dated 1st October 1910). Dr. T. M. Nair at Madras was of the view that no seditious article had been published though the Dewan could have taken legal action for libel. There was nothing in the newspaper to cause disaffection in the people's mind towards the Government. (*Kerala Patrika* dated 22nd October, 1910). Dr. T. M. Nair's views were attacked by the *Indian Patriot*, published at Madras by Mr. P. Karunakara Menon. "We feel bound to say" said the *Hindu*..... "that the Draconian order issued in the case is one not worthy of an enlightened Government. It is a clear confession of weakness and is not an indication of strength for a Government to fall back upon force, where it should rely upon law for the maintenance of order among its people". (*The Hindu*, Madras, 28th September, 1910). At first *Madras Mail* supported the Government's action but changed its views after Dr. T. M. Nair's comments. The *Bengalee*, the *Leader*, the *Standard*, the *Empire* and the *Mahratta* of Poona condemned the Government of Travancore. Within Kerala, the *Subhashini*, the *Kerala Taraka* (at Tiruvalla) and the *Nazrani Deepika* (at Mannanam) approved of the punishment. The *Malayala Manorama* maintained silence. The *Kerala Sanchari* and the *Malabari* strongly criticised the Government. The *Kerala Sanchari* said that instead of deporting an Editor the Government could have enacted press law as was in force in British India. (*Kerala Sanchari*, 26th October, 1910). The *West Coast Spectator* retracted from its opinion expressed in

It may be remembered that in those days other eminent leaders of India also were made to suffer. Aurobindo Ghose made his own mark on the political horizon; Mr. Mitra and Ali Brothers were imprisoned; Lokamanya Tilak, Editor of the *Kesari* was deported to Mandalay. Mr. Horniman was sent back to his own country. As far as Mr. Ramakrishna Pillai was concerned, solitary imprisonment might have been far better for him than such deportation for life from his own State which, in those days, brought immense misery to a person. The spontaneous reaction of the Indian press to his punishment revealed the extent of gross injustice done to freedom of expression.¹¹

Subsequently Mr. Ramakrishna Pillai started legal proceedings against the *Indian Patriot* of Madras for having brought in the allegation of sedition against him. He was aware of the difficulties involved for he had no records to prove his case. The proceedings proved to be a protracted affair that swallowed all his limited earnings.

Mr. Pillai's political views are found best expressed in the *Journal Keralan* which he started in about 1905. He wanted the citizens to be conscious of their rights and the Government, of its obligations; the income derived by the Government from the people, said he, should be devoted to their welfare. The theory of sacredness of monarchy continued to have its emotional appeal for the

favour of the Government and later realised that the offence of sedition would not stand the test of a court of law. On the whole only the enemies of Mr. Pillai gloated over the punishment while several newspapers were mortally afraid of the Government. They referred to the Government as a physician who would amputate a diseased limb to save the other parts of the body.

11. On Saturday 28th September, 1912, a meeting was held at Palghat under the chairmanship of Mr. V. V. Parameswara Iyer, Headmaster and Manager of the local Native High School when Mr. N. S. Nair, representing the Malayalis in Malaysia, presented Mr. Ramakrishna Pillai with a gold medal in recognition of his "chivalrous patriotism". Mr. Nair had been sent to Malabar by the Malayalis of Malaysia and the meeting was convened at his instance and also with the support of Mr. K. N. Padmanabha Panikkar, Editor of the (now defunct) *Sri Parasurama* of Quilon. The gold medal was of the size of a rupee, artistically made and bearing the inscription 'Fear, craft and avarice cannot rear a State'.

* It was a souvenir of his 'deportation on causes unknown'. Mr. Pillai was also presented with an address, signed on behalf of the Malayalees of Malaysia, by Mr. P. K. Nambiar, Bar-at-Law (Inner Temple), of the Supreme Court, British Malaysia. (Letter from Mr. N. S. Nair to the Dewan, Mr. P. Rajagopalachari dated 29th September, 1912). In the letter Mr. Nair wished the Dewan an 'early retirement from public service and an equally early recall' of Mr. Pillai.

politically superstitious elements in Travancore; the Indian National Congress was just beginning to transform itself into a popular organisation. It was at such a time of political immaturity that Mr. Pillai boldly gave expression to his views on democracy. He was much under the influence of Locke's doctrine that monarchical power was delegated by the people and that if abused, it should naturally revert to them. It was inconceivable that this theory, though practically applied in England in the seventeenth century itself, would be boldly asserted by the Editor of a newspaper in India, much less in Travancore where the Princely order flourished, at a time when there was neither any clear idea about independence nor any organised movement for the realisation of responsible government. He was probably conscious of the great potentialities of Non-Co-operation which Gandhiji adopted later as a principle and policy. At a time when the whole nation had been shocked by the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai, Mr. Pillai called on the people of Malabar never to co-operate with the authorities, in extending a welcome, during his tour, to the Governor of Madras who represented British imperialism.

On 28 March 1916, he died at Cannanore, an exile from his homeland of Travancore¹². By his birth and by his death he effected the emotional integration of Travancore with Malabar. He remained throughout his career a fighter for freedom of expression who underwent several hardships, willingly shared by his cultured wife¹³.

12. His remains were brought from his tomb at the Cannanore beach and buried in a prominent public place in Trivandrum. His burst was unveiled at Trivandrum by Mr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India, in 1957 on the side of the main road facing the place where the fearless Editor had been publishing the *Swadesabhimani* at one time.

13. See *Vyazhavatta Smaranakal* by B. Kalliani Amma. Mr. Ramakrishna Pillai is one of those misunderstood men who are put into pillory when alive and placed on a pedestal after demise. With high family connections and alluring prospects of an official career, he had chosen the "wrong" path, "wrong because it was so *very* right". He was ahead of the times in which he lived. He did not care "to bend his knees to vested interests" but "spoke with the voice of the people", and thus offended the men dressed in "brief authority". He had an eminent collaborator in Mr. K. Narayana Kurukkal, both of them making the "Palace sycophants wince under their deadly blows". It was ironical that on his deportation, not a single voice of protest was raised in his own land; deserted was he by those for whom he fought with his pen. "He was to Malayalam journalism what Lokamanya Tilak was to Marathi journalism. Both of them had deep scholarship;..... Both were experts in being 'nice and nasty' at the same time". See O. M. Thomas, *Under the Knife*, pp. 105-115.

CHAPTER 3

AN EPISODE OF TERRORISM

We have here to refer to an episode in the freedom struggle, characterised by terrorism which fortunately represented only a passing phase.

The Act of 1892 had failed to satisfy even the political aspirations of the Moderates. Appeals and prayers did not evoke any positive response from the authorities. When persuasion failed it was realised that pressure alone would yield results. The efficient but unsympathetic ways of the British bureaucracy, the exclusion of educated Indians from the public services, the humiliating treatment, symbolic of slavery, accorded to Indians in the British colonies, the repressive legislation that widened the scope of sedition and the sapping of the economic resources of the land provided ample material for universal dissatisfaction. The result of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 thrilled the nation.

It was against this background that the Extremists came to the political forefront. They were not mendicants but self-reliant fighters, worshipping nationalism with religious fervour. Their new appeal was to the masses in India. The boycott and *swadeshi* movements gathered a new significance in the attempted destruction of the British vested interests in the country. The past in all its glory inspired the patriots who looked forward to an equally glorious future. The exploits of Pratap Singh, Shivaji and Rani Lakshmi Bai kindled a flame in every heart. The worship of Mother Kali conveyed a new message to many persons and indicated to them a new approach. The growth of Extremism and the cult of terror proved attractive to them and held the field for some time.

The founder of the militant revolutionary school in the national movement was Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak who carried on relentless propaganda against the British through his paper, *Kesari*. The revolutionary creed and the cult of violence found a fertile soil in Bengal, already seething with discontent over the partition of 1905. Under Tilak's inspiration, Bepin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose spread the cult of militant nationalism through *New India* and *Bande Mataram* and raised the slogan, 'India for Indians'. The patriotic fervour stirred up by them permeated throughout the country. The newspaper, *Yugantar*, founded by Birendra Kumar Ghose together with the brother of Swami Vivekananda, ardently prepared the Bengali youth for terrorist activities and incited them

to murder Englishmen for the overthrow of imperialism, to take a life rather than lay down a life. A few of the South Indian students in Calcutta and Bombay came entirely under the spell of the Extremist leaders of these two centres and it was through them that the cult of terrorism made its way to Kerala. The warm reception given to Bepin Chandra Pal during his short crusade in Madras in 1907 revealed that an appreciable minority among the members of the younger generation was ready to take to terrorism which soon found sporadic expression in the riots at Tirunelveli and Tuticorin.

It was against this general background that the incidents narrated in this chapter occurred.

Maniyachi railway station, in Tirunelveli District, presented no unusual appearance on 17 June, 1911. Mr. R. W. D. E. Ashe, I. C. S., Collector of Tirunelveli, left Tirunelveli Bridge station by the morning train to catch up the Boat-Mail train at Maniyachi junction. He was, with his wife, occupying the only first class compartment in the train which arrived at Maniyachi a few minutes ahead of the Mail Train. The couple continued to sit in the compartment. The Senior Station Master went to Mr. Ashe for a talk and then left him to go back to his office while his two young sons continued to stand, a few yards from the compartment, looking at the distinguished visitors. Two men now passed between the two boys and the train and while one of them went up to the window of the compartment, the other went past it and stood near the servants' compartment. The former pointed a pistol at Mr. Ashe who flung his *toppee* at him. A report was heard. Mr. Ashe got up shouting and fell. The assassin frightened the officer's peon and ran, pistol in hand, and entered the 'native passengers' latrine. A crowd gathered before the latrine and a constable, entering it later, found the man dead inside. His companion had escaped.

Meanwhile Mr. Ashe succumbed to the injury and his body was taken to Tirunelveli Bridge.

The post-mortem examination revealed a letter in the breast-pocket of the shirt worn by the assassin, Vanchi Iyer of Shenkottah in Travancore territory, who evidently had committed suicide by shooting himself after his fatal attack on Mr. Ashe. On the basis of the letter, search parties were sent to Shenkottah, Tuticorin and Ottapidaram. Arumugam Pillai of Tuticorin was arrested but tendered pardon under section 337 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Another resident of Tuticorin, Somasundaram Pillai, was similarly pardoned, though involved in the case.

After investigations, fourteen persons were committed for trial to the High Court, Madras, under section 6(b) of Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908. They were charged with conspiracy

among themselves and with others to wage war against the King, (coming within section 121A of the I. P. C.), entered into between January 1910 and June, 1911 at various places and the abetment of the murder of Mr. Ashe. They had conspired with Vanchi Iyer and Dharmaraja Iyer (both of whom were dead), Madaswami (who had absconded), and Somasundaram and Ramasvami Iyer (who had been called as witnesses).

Among the accused were Jagannatha Iyengar, Harihara Iyer, Vembu Iyer *alias* Mahadeva Iyer, Savadi Arumachalam Pillai, Alagappa Pillai and Pichumani Iyer *alias* Venkatachalam Iyer, all of whom belonged to Shenkottah, apart from Babu Pillai and Desikachari Punalur.

Mr. C. F. Napier, Public Prosecutor, appeared for the Crown, assisted by Mr. T. Richmond and Mr. A. Sundara Sastriar. Mr. T. Prakasam defended Vembu Iyer and Pichumani Iyer.

Arumugam Pillai and Somasundaram Pillai had attended at Tuticorin the lectures of V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and Subramanya Siva, which preceded the Tirunelveli riots in 1908. They became subscribers to some "seditious" papers published from Pondicherry and were influenced by the ideas advocated by them. The actual conspiracy had its inception early in April, 1910 when Nilakanta Brahmachari,¹ an educated young man of twenty-one hailing from Erukkoor near Shiyali in Tanjore District went from Pondicherry to Tenkasi to hold a meeting. He was both a political preacher and an anarchist leader. He had been engaged in "seditious" journalism at Pondicherry as Editor of the vernacular paper, *Suryodaya*. In March 1910 it was proscribed by the Government along with others and the revolutionaries were compelled to resort to new methods of "seditious" propaganda. Thus came Nilakanta Brahmachari to Tenkasi to which he was no stranger. He stayed at Madathukadai Chidambaram Pillai's house where *Vande Mataram* Subramania Iyer and Arumugam Pillai also were present, among others. The first meeting of the conspirators was on 10 April, 1910. Nilakantan referred to the punishment by the Government, of V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva in the south and of several persons in Bengal involved in Midnapur and Alipore Boip Cases; he characterised the meeting as the beginning of a new plan for the attainment of *swaraj*, because the earlier attempts through journalism and

1. His career was a series of jumps from "accountant to actor-from actor to sub-editor, from sub-editor to political preacher-from political preacher to anarchist leader-from anarchist to editor again-from editor to author-and lastly from author to a homeless pilgrim in Benares". Preliminary Register, Cases Nos. 3, 4, 5 and 6 of 1911 on the file of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Tirunelveli.

isolated associations had been foiled by the Government; the new plan was to select proper men in every village and town, organise a revolution throughout the country and massacre the white people on the same day.

Those who were present at the meeting agreed to join the movement. They worshipped a picture of Goddess Kali, making offerings of sacred ash and flowers. Some *kumkum* (red powder) was mixed with water and the picture sprinkled with the liquid, each person drinking a little of the red mixture, which was symbolic of the blood of the Englishman. Then an oath was written on a piece of paper to the effect that the life and property of those who took it would be dedicated to the ideal of *swaraj* and that any one, divulging the secrets of the Society of which they were members should be put to death. Every one pricked his thumb and affixed the thumb impression in blood. New names were given to the members to conceal their identity. Undoubtedly, Nilakantan was the founder of the new 'Society'.

Subsequently the members dispersed and Nilakantan went to Pondicherry. About the middle of June, he again started on the same errand, visiting Cochin, Alleppey and Quilon in Travancore. It was on this occasion that he came into contact with Vanchi Iyer and other Brahmins of Shenkottah. Vanchi Iyer was, at that time a clerk in Travancore Forest Department at Punalur. In July, Nilakantan was in Shenkottah where Vanchi Iyer leased a house for five days from a gentleman, Sivakaminatha Pillai. From this time onwards, Nilakantan began to pose as a *swami* and held secret meetings in the house. He then went to Tuticorin where, about the middle of the month, a second oath meeting was held. Some new members, from Vellala community, joined the secret organisation.

The new society thus organised in British territory, came to have branches at Shenkottah and Punalur villages by the month of August. Arumugam Pillai became the distributing agent of the *Dharmam* published at Pondicherry which was the chief organ of the movement and the connecting link among the members of the conspiracy. Those who did not take the blood-oath were not permitted to take part in the secret meetings of the "Society".

In the middle of 1910 Ramaswamy Iyer of Sundarapandiapuram was travelling in Travancore and Cochin, giving gramophone performances. He became acquainted with Vanchi Iyer as well as Harihera Iyer, a young cloth merchant of Shenkottah, doing business with his brothers at Alleppey. They came to Quilon and it was arranged that Ramaswamy Iyer should sell his gramophone to Babu Pillai at Punalur for the use of a 'Society' in which the latter was interested. Ramaswamy Iyer spent a few days at Punalur in the company of

Nilakantan, Jagannatha Iyengar, Vanchi Iyer, Harihara Iyer and others. This was the third meeting of the 'Society'. Nilakantan delivered lectures on Aurobindo Ghose, Subramania Bharati, Bepin Chandra Pal and Tilak and told the members present that similar "Societies" existed at Bombay, Baroda, Pondicherry and other places and that guns and ammunition were obtainable at Pondicherry. After the talks, a special meeting was held. Mother Kali worshipped and an oath taken, similar to the ones taken at Tenkasi and Tuticorin. Ramaswamy Iyer was commissioned to fetch the copies of *India*, a proscribed paper, from Tenkasi.

The fourth and the fifth meetings of the "society" appear to have been held at Shenkottah. Nilakantan harangued on the economic misery of India. An attempt was made to enrol Sundaram Iyer of Kadayanallur as a member but he appears to have been not only frightened by the idea of a blood-oath but also offended by the inter-caste dining in which the members of the 'Society' freely indulged. Probably there was a sixth meeting at Punalur where, after more exhortation from Nilakantan, the blood-oath was taken again by those present.

From the evidence given by Venkatarama Iyer of Shenkottah who had not become a full-fledged member of the 'Society', it would appear that even before the advent of Nilakantan there had been a secret Society at Shenkottah, called *Bharata Mata Association* of which Vanchi Iyer and Dharma Raja Iyer had been members. They used to read and discuss the "seditious" papers from Pondicherry though they never brought themselves within the reach of law. This Association collapsed after March-April, 1910 when the Pondicherry papers, *India*, *Vijaya* and *Suryodaya* were proscribed by the Government.

The 'Society' was more active in Travancore than in Tamilnad probably on account of the fact that recruits like Vanchi Iyer strove constantly to realise its objectives. It was believed that its activities were less likely to be seriously noticed by the authorities of a Princely State than by the British Government. This is evidenced by the fact that when the authorities in Travancore began their enquiries, two of the suspected individuals committed suicide. Dharma Raja Iyer of Shenkottah who took corrosive sublimate to escape arrest and Venkateswara Iyer, a well-to-do pleader of Punalur who inflicted gashes on his own throat and chest.

On 9th January 1911 Vanchi Iyer went on leave for three months. In March, he met Somasundaram Pillai at Ottapidaram and suggested that Mr. Ashe should first be killed as being the Head of a District and an officer who had taken a leading part in the suppression of the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company and in the unhappy events

at Tuticorin in 1908. At two meetings subsequently held in April-May at Shenkottah, Vanchi Iyer apparently took up the leadership much as Nilakantan had done on previous occasions. These two meetings appear to have been the last ones in the series, of which there is any evidence.

As regards the events immediately preceding the tragedy, Arunachalam Pillai left for Calcutta on 15 June, probably to avoid suspicion. Vanchi Iyer was in Tirunelveli for three days until the morning of the 17 June when he left the place with Sankarakrishna Iyer, to catch the train by which Mr. Ashe was travelling. It was Sankarakrishna Iyer, Vanchi Iyer's companion, who escaped immediately after the tragedy at Maniyachi. Subsequently he too was arrested and brought to trial.

On 15 February, 1912 judgment was pronounced by Sir Charles Arnold White, Chief Justice, and Justices Sankaran Nair and Ayling of the High Court of Judicature, Madras. It had been argued that before the evidence of an accomplice could be acted on it must be corroborated in material particulars. The Chief Justice and Justice Ayling were of the view that such a principle would lead to the result that a court could not act on such evidence "when that evidence stood alone although the court was satisfied that that evidence was true". Though the tainted evidence of an accomplice should be carefully scanned and received with caution, yet "if the jury in the one case or the court in the other, credits the evidence, a conviction proceeding upon it is not illegal". In fact the statement given by Arumugam when his house at Tuticorin was searched could not have been tutored by the police because when the investigating officers were anxious to discover the traces of the immediate accomplices of the crime, he was referring to the existence of a 'Secret Society', which might well be the basis of another case but which was not connected with the murder of Mr. Ashe except in the single fact that Vanchi Iyer, the assassin, had been a member of that organisation. The police practically took no action on the basis of Arumugam's evidence until Somasundaram's statement supplied later some suggestion of a link between the 'Society' and the murder. Highly seditious literature had been seized from the house of Arumugam on a search by the police. A suggestion had been made that some of the accused from Shenkottah had a grudge against Nilakantan for misappropriating money advanced to him by them in connection with a book he wished to publish but such a motive would certainly have no bearing on either Arumugam or Somasundaram. None of the three approvers, Arumugam, Somasundaram and Ramaswamy, who at first absconded but was arrested later, could be considered a person of education or of particularly sharp intellect and the impression left by them, after rigorous cross-examination, on the learned judges was favourable

to the general truth of their version, though in view of the lapse of time some discrepancy might be noted in some of their statements which covered however only details and not fundamentals. The discrepancy was confined to the dates of certain incidents, the prohibition of marriage as one of the conditions of membership of the "Secret Society" and the substitution of names. The condition regarding marriage was disregarded wherever it suited the members who again only partially adopted the intelligent suggestion of Nilakantan regarding assumed names.

In regard to the question of corroborative evidence, obviously in the case of a secret conspiracy it is practically impossible for any one to speak about its exact nature or the identity of the conspirators, without becoming to some extent, an active accomplice oneself. Arumugam had destroyed all the incriminating correspondence preserved by him at the end of 1910 while Vanchi Iyer made away with all his later correspondence, the latest letter found being one dated 4 January, 1911. Yet there was a mass of evidence, oral and documentary, corroborating the evidence of the approvers, in regard to the existence and nature of the conspiracy organised by Nilakantan. About fifty incriminating letters had been seized by the police and in no instance the genuineness of the letter had been impugned. The letters revealed an extraordinary degree of intimacy and sense of brotherhood among the conspirators so widely separated as by caste, occupation and residence. Evidently the members of the 'Society' had laid aside all caste distinctions, recognising only the "caste (*jati*) of Bharata". The learned judges were convinced that the letters "contain numerous passages for which no alternative explanation has been or apparently can be offered except the community of interest due to Nilakantan's 'Secret Society'. A pamphlet, seized by the police and purporting to have been issued from the Faringhee Destroyer Press, stated:

"Cherish rancour in your minds. Swear in the presence of God that you will remove this sinner of a Faringhee out of our country and firmly establish *swaraj* therein. Take an oath that as long as the Faringhee exercises authority in our land of Bharata you will regard life as worthless Lord Vyasa himself has stated that the white empire would be ruined between the years Nandana and Ananda (1892 and 1914). According to these words the *swadeshi* war has begun in our country. A violent war should take place within the year Ananda. Death may occur either in the sixth or in the hundredth year. Regarding this worthless life as a trifle, we shall make *swaraj* and our name shine in the country by killing the white Faringhees and then go to the paradise of heroes".

The judges were of the view that though in a sense the conspiracy was contemptible it was certainly not negligible. Though no acts of violence or lawlessness had been proved as the direct outcome of the conspiracy "it is difficult to over-estimate the mischievous effect of a conspiracy such as has been proved in this case on the minds of all brought within its influence". The majority of the judges found that the first charge against the accused was proved. They sentenced Nilakantan, the "leading spirit among the conspirators", to rigorous imprisonment for seven years², Sankarakrishna Iyer and Harihara Iyer for four and three years respectively and Jagannatha Iyengar, Bapu Pillai and Pichumani Iyer for one year each. Two of the accused were acquitted in the Appellate Court. The appeal had been heard in the High Court for about two months on the whole. The judgment given by Mr. Justice Sankaran Nair was indeed long.

The unfortunate murder of Mr. Ashe is indeed a tragic episode in the freedom struggle in this part of the country. It reflected the contemporary political tendency, the cult of terrorism, that found expression through some acts of violence in different parts of India. The individuals concerned were worried about the economic exploitation of the country by the British and the discrimination practised against Indians at that time. They were in no mood to tolerate the deliberate ruin of Indian industries and the shipping trade. "If a black man starts a ship in trade he is sentenced to six years' rigorous imprisonment as the great man Chidambaram Pillai", stated one of the "seditious" leaflets. The cult of violence however was a passing phase and soon the nation was going to be taught that to die for a cause was better than to kill and that the wrinkle of personal malice should be wiped off from the brow of the freedom struggle.

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2. Nilakantan had been arrested at Calcutta in July, 1911 and brought to Tirunelveli where Mr. Tampoe, Headquarters Assistant Collector committed him, along with the others, to take his trial before the High Court of Madras. While serving the sentence, Nilakantan escaped from the Bellary Jail in September, 1914 but was soon recaptured at Dharmavaram. He was released in August, 1919. His restless and militant spirit again brought him to jail wherefrom he was finally released again in June, 1930. He settled down later in Nandi Hills.

CHAPTER 4

A MAHARAJA ABDICATES

We shall, in this chapter, deal with the events leading to the isolated and rare phenomenon of the abdication of the throne by a monarch as early as 1914 when he found that the Paramount Power prevented him from doing good to his subjects according to his own ideas.

On 6 September, 1913, the Maharaja of Cochin, Sri Rama Varma, addressed a letter to the Viceroy:

"My esteemed Friend,

It may be within Your Excellency's memory that on the special recommendation of Sir Arthur Lawley, the Governor of Madras, Your Excellency was pleased to permit my nephew who is now the 24th in the line of succession to appear for the competitive examination held in Calcutta for selection of officers in the Indian Financial Department. I regret to state that although my nephew appeared twice for the examination, he was unable to secure a nomination. I understand that there would be four appointments made next December and I beg that your Excellency may be pleased to nominate my nephew for one of the posts if such a course is permissible under the existing rules and thus exempt him from appearing at the examination.

As Lord Pentland is just away on a visit to Simla and as there is not much time I beg Your Excellency will pardon me for having made this request direct. But I am communicating with the British Resident and hope to receive a favourable reply from Your Excellency through the usual channel".

The British Resident drew the attention¹ of the Dewan to the improper action of the Maharaja in having addressed the Viceroy as "My esteemed Friend" rather than as "My Lord". In 1911 also the Maharaja had done the same thing while addressing the Earl of Minto². The Government of Madras was surprised that "even in a quasi-personal matter His Highness the Raja would have thought fit to address His Excellency the Viceroy direct"³.

1. The Resident's letter to the Dewan dated 24th October, 1913.

2. The Resident's letter to the Dewan dated 15th July, 1911.

3. *Ibid.* dated 24th October, 1913.

But really the form of address adopted by the Maharaja was strictly in accordance with the latest advice he had received from the Resident⁴. It was a fact that the Maharaja had no intention of corresponding with the Viceroy behind the back of the Resident or the Government of Madras and that the Viceroy himself was not opposed to the procedure for he had sent a direct reply to the Maharaja⁵. Such direct correspondence was not a new practice⁶. As the Maharaja had been enjoying the privilege, he was naturally "unaware of any alteration in this practice hitherto not objected to". He also took exception to the Resident's letter to the Dewan referring to a procedure he himself had adopted, for his letter to the Viceroy was a "purely personal matter" with which the Dewan had no concern at all and the objection, if any, should have been pointed out to him personally⁷.

Subsequently the Government of Madras recognised that "it is neither proper nor just to attribute to Your Highness' initiative your use on the recent occasion of an incorrect form"⁸. They added that they would not "question the customary right of Your Highness to address and be addressed by His Excellency the Viceroy direct in matters of private and personal nature" and that they were satisfied that "You have no intention of ignoring the established practice of addressing all official communications to the Government of India through the Local Government"⁹.

Mutual correspondence of this kind had already become a fly in the ointment of relations between the Maharaja and the Government of Madras. We next note an announcement¹⁰ made on 8 December, 1913, by the Maharaja in the following terms:

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4. On 11th December, 1911 the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, Mr. J. H. Dee Bonlay had written to Mr. Forbes that the "proper address is 'My esteemed Friend, and subscription "remain with much consideration, Your Excellency's sincere Friend'."
 5. Dewan's letter to the Resident dated 4th November, 1913.
 6. When G. C. I. E. was conferred on the Maharaja, Lord Hardinge sent a letter of congratulations directly to him and the latter on his part sent directly a suitable reply conveying his feelings of gratitude and thankfulness (Maharaja's letter dated 12th December, 1911). Similarly on the increase of his salute the Maharaja got another letter of congratulations directly from the Viceroy and he replied suitably. On more than one occasion the Maharaja had sent congratulations as well as condolences directly to the Viceroy. He was in direct correspondence with Lord Amphil¹ also when he was the acting Viceroy.
 7. Dewan's letter 4th November, 1913.
 8. Resident's letter dated 16th December, 1913.
 9. *Ibid.*
 10. Maharaja's announcement dated 8th December, 1913.

"My beloved subjects,

The announcement now I am going to make will, I am sure, cause you surprise and grief but hoping you will bear with me and extend to me your sympathy, I now convey to you my wish, owing to advancing age, to retire into private life and my intention to give effect to the same as soon as I have concluded the few important measures, undertaken by me which, I am hoping, I shall be able to do before long. I hope to bid farewell to you in a public Durbar the date of which will in due course be announced by my Dewan".

The Maharaja had been very much annoyed that certain schemes of reform and administrative matters which he had brought to the notice of the Government of Madras were kept pending for a long time. The Government of Madras stated that consideration of the problems referred to them had been suddenly interrupted by the announcement of the Maharaja's desire to abdicate and that such schemes of far-reaching effect could be introduced only after his successor got an opportunity to study them in detail.¹¹ They added that even if the Maharaja were to continue on the throne the schemes could not be considered until the Dewan. Mr. Banerji's successor, was appointed. But for the indifference of the Government of Madras, the Maharaja felt, he could have implemented the schemes¹² much earlier for the benefit of the people and to the satisfaction of his own conscience. Of the schemes the most important were those concerned with the formation of an Advisory Council, Tenancy Legislation and Village Panchayat Organisation. As they were kept pending for a

11. Maharaja's letter to Lord Pentland dated 19th November, 1913.

12. The matters kept pending were:

- (a) Advisory Council Scheme proposed as early as 2nd January, 1913. No reply was received.
- (b) Village Panchayat Scheme. No reply was received since 3rd May, 1913.
- (c) Tenancy Legislation. No reply was received after the draft Bill had been sent on 8th February, 1913.
- (d) Cochin Harbour Scheme. Since November, 1911 no reply was received.
- (e) Tachudaya Kaimal Case. An appeal had been submitted as early as 17th July, 1912.
- (f) Chittur *Kanom* Sales, pending since July, 1912.
- (g) Cochin Port's limits, pending since 29th September, 1911.
- (h) Chittur Irrigation Dispute; pending since 1st January, 1913.
- (i) Internal Irrigation Works. No reply was received since 10th July, 1911.

long time it was unreasonable to argue that the question of abdication was preventing their settlement. The schemes had been worked out by the Maharaja himself and there could have been no constitutional objection to their implementation before his intended abdication. As a ruling chief, the Maharaja could change, amend or annul the decrees of his predecessors which might be inconsistent with the good of the State; his successor too might do the same in future; there was no point therefore in the argument that the proposed abdication stood in the way of the consideration of the schemes by the Paramount Power. The Maharaja stated: "I do not think I can constitutionally be prevented from carrying them out while still exercising full powers as a Ruling Chief... .. I am bound by treaty to give the utmost consideration to the advice of your Excellency in Council but when no advice is offered, although sought, how am I to carry on the administration and how should I be justified in waiting are questions which I would beg Your Excellency kindly to answer".¹³

Moreover, the Maharaja contended that the "Raja and the Dewan are one, that they have no separate existence in the constitution and that the Raja had an undivided authority over his Diwan". The Diwan's position or attitude being of little consequence, a change of the Dewan could in no way have effected the introduction of the "salutary schemes". The Dewan, after all, was to be guided by the Maharaja.

The Maharaja was particularly hurt when the stopping of the Chittur *Kanom* Sales had vitally affected the revenues of the State. Other Chiefs in India had made announcements on public occasions long before the introduction of specific schemes and there was no justification in fettering the Maharaja's discretion to refer, at least in general terms, to the proposals regarding the Panchayat Organisation and the Advisory Council. The Government of Madras ought to have considered the intrinsic merit of the schemes without any reference to his intended abdication. It was immaterial to the Maharaja that his name would in future be associated with the ultimate form of the measures he had contemplated and, as he stated, "it will be a cause of infinite regret to me if my abdication is to take place before I have accomplished what I have myself undertaken and also promised to my people".

The Governor of Madras regretted that there was "an unwelcome interruption of the uniformly pleasant and friendly tone which has hitherto characterised our intercourse, both private and official". He added that but for the fact that the

13. From the Maharaja to Lord Pentland, 19th November, 1913.

British Resident had been intimated as early as 13 June 1913 of the Maharaja's intention to abdicate, the Government of Madras might have tendered advice to the Government of Cochin on the proposed important measures.¹⁴ "Your resignation pressed by you upon this Government," added the Governor, "has now been accepted by us and finally approved by the Government of India." The Governor did not like to separate the proposals from the question of abdication for "to belittle the loss to Cochin of Your Highness' retirement would be, I venture to think, altogether indefensible on both personal and public grounds". The advice

Madras Governor's letter to the Maharaja dated 22nd December, 1913. In a letter dated 30th December, 1913 the Resident pointed out that the Tenancy Bill had reached the Government of Madras on 15th May, 1913. While it was being considered, the Government of Cochin sent a revised draft which the Government of Madras received only in October. But on hearing about the contemplated abdication further consideration of the Bill was postponed as it was one that had provoked acute and extensive public criticism.

The Village Panchayat Scheme was received by the Government of Madras only in July 1913. Its consideration also was held up by the Abdication question.

The original scheme regarding the Advisory Council was received by the Government of Madras as early as 20 February, 1912. Their reply was communicated through Mr. Graham's letter dated 17 April, 1912. In January, 1913 the Government of Cochin sent a revised scheme the consideration of which too was postponed by the Government of Madras.

As regards the Tachudaya Kaimal's Case involving the Travancore Durbar, the Government of Madras delayed forwarding it to the Secretary of State for India as they were making some efforts to effect an amicable settlement.

The Government of Madras felt that the fixing of the limits of the Port of Cochin would be protracted involving a study of the old documents. It was no urgent problem too.

The Chittur *Kanom* Sales, the Irrigation Works and the Irrigation Dispute were closely related. The Government of Madras thought that they could not agree to the *Kanom* Sales involving the extension of irrigation from certain works in Cochin State until there was a guarantee protecting the rights of the ryots in British Malabar to water from the same system. The negotiations in this respect failed to reach any conclusion.

The reply of the Government of Madras regarding the Cochin Harbour had been sent to the Government of Cochin on 2nd December, 1913.

tendered to the Maharaja, according to the Governor, against publishing the proposed legislative changes was not to fetter his discretion but to satisfy the dictates of prudence and caution so far as they were of far-reaching public importance.

The view of the Government of Madras was that in the light of the Maharaja's impending retirement and a possible change of the Dewan, it would not be fair to embarrass their successors by obliging them either to accept and administer measures which they might have had no opportunity to consider earlier or to change, amend or annul them and thereby earn an undeserved odium. While agreeing with the Maharaja in his view of the constitutional position of the Dewan, the Government of Madras opined that "as the Dewan is the Ruling Chief's principal instrument for the conduct of his administration, a change in the personnel of that instrument almost coinciding with a similar change in the personnel of the Ruler must render it doubly difficult, both for the Ruler to direct and for the Dewan under his orders to administer newly introduced measures of the highest importance, with the inception and evolution of which neither would have any personal acquaintance¹⁵."

The revised scheme for the establishment of an Advisory Council and a "Special" Council for Cochin had been prompted by the Maharaja's desire to admit his people to a more definite "share in public life and to supply a means of educating them in the exercise of civic responsibility". Its professed aim was to secure to the Government the advantages of an ordered expression of public opinion that would operate to guard the State against the dangers of discontinuity of policy. It provided for some check on the Dewan's exercise of power and "for power entrusted to a Council comprising a majority of nearly two to one of elected members to veto if three fourths of the members are agreed, any proposal of the Dewan to change or revise important policy or procedure as laid down in the standing orders or codes of the departments which affects the administration in general and the rights and privileges of the people"¹⁶. The Government of Madras felt that such a progressive clause would very much adversely affect the powers of the Dewan as well as the "integrity of those powers, which the Maharaja was holding in trust for his successors and which is the very basis of his treaty obligations to the Paramount Power"¹⁷.

Apart from the question whether such powers should be conceded even in principle to the Advisory Council, the Government

15. Resident's letter dated 30 December, 1913.

16. From the Resident to Mr. Banerji, 21 February, 1914.

17. *Ibid*.

of Madras deeply felt that they would be rendered ineffectual by the constitution of the "Special" Council. The latter body was to consist of the Chief Judge, the Dewan Peishkar and a specially co-opted member. The "Special" Council would not possess any substance of power because the presence of the Chief Judge in an Executive Body would constitute an anomaly and the Dewan Peishkar could not be legitimately expected to act, independent of the Dewan; moreover the impartiality of the co-opted member would not be beyond doubt. With the casting vote in his hands, the Dewan could easily reduce the body to one of impotence and ignore or nullify any proposal with which he was not in accord. The Government of Madras stated that the functions of the Advisory Council should be reduced to advice and criticism and that it should have no power either to fetter the action of the Government or initiate legislative or administrative action. They were of the view that the formation of a popular Representative Assembly enjoying well-defined powers to criticise the administration and express the wishes of the people which, with time and experience, might gradually receive enlarged powers would be in the best interests of the State¹⁸.

The Maharaja decided that the creation of a Popular Assembly on the lines suggested by the Government of Madras would not be of any "real use" and so dropped that important scheme.

On 7 December, 1914 the Maharaja gave effect to his intention to abdicate. On that day he formally took leave of his subjects:

"My beloved subjects,

I have this day laid down the reins of the administration and have come here to take leave of you. The idea of severing my official connection with the affairs of the State is not at all pleasant to me and I dare say it will be disagreeable to one and all of you. I would not have carried it out if I would possibly have helped it. I have been for some time feeling the strain of the administration rather keenly and the desire for peace and rest has steadily been growing upon me. Advancing age may chiefly be responsible for such a desire. I put off the step till now for the single reason that my people would not view it with favour. I do not think I can postpone it any longer without doing serious injustice first to my work and secondly to my health.

I may assure you, my beloved subjects, that though I am, owing to circumstances beyond my control, obliged to retire from

18. The Government of Madras pointed to the existence of a Popular Assembly in Mysore where it had become part of the constitutional fabric; Cochin might develop her representative institution on that model.

the public life, my services will always be at your disposal and your happiness will be my happiness and your prosperity, my prosperity. I am not able to do much active work hereafter for you but what little lies in my power I shall always be ready to do gladly.

I had made mention of the organisation of an Advisory Council on my *Shashthipoorthy* Day. After further consideration and consultation I have come to the conclusion that it is not quite time yet to get to entrust the people with high powers and responsibilities of the administration at the very outset. The passing of that measure is postponed for the time being. But when the Darbar are satisfied that the people have had sufficient training and experience in the art of self-government for which the Panchayat management has given them a very good opportunity, the introduction of the Advisory Council can be considered. This, I think, will be the safest course for both the people and the Darbar.

* * * * *

I bid you farewell, farewell"

The voluntary abdication of the throne by any reigning monarch is a rare phenomenon in history. Exactly twenty-two years later, in the same month of December, the constitutional monarch of Britain was destined to give up the throne on account of the conservatism of the British Government that stood between himself and the lady of his choice. His abdication was not in defiance of constitutional principles but in deference to them, for, he felt that he would not be able to discharge his duties as a constitutional ruler under the newly developed circumstances. The Maharaja of Cochin abdicated and retired into private life as he found that he could not realise the objective of a broad-based government to which his heart was wedded. A progressive-minded Ruler, he realised, could not keep self-respect and the throne together. In either case, the act of abdication was a matter of personal choice, characterised by an announcement made to the people, expressing the suppressed agony of a noble soul. It is instructive to note that as early as 1913-14 a Maharaja in a Princely State thought in terms of popular curb on Executive power, only to see that his hands were tied by foreign imperialism.

CHAPTER 5

A REVOLUTIONARY ABROAD

When the political leaders of India debated, discussed, negotiated and agitated in the usual manner a son of Kerala, with a unique touch of originality, romance and adventure, tried to realise the objective of political independence by striking a new chord altogether. Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai's revolutionary plan was to get active help from Germany for securing India's freedom. This "patriot extraordinary" dedicated his thoughts, deeds and life itself to this noble ideal. The bud of his patriotism blossomed on the soil of Germany whither the currents of destiny took him in his impressionable youth.

Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai was born on 15 September, 1891 as the son of a police constable. Mr. Chinnaaswamy Pillai, of Tamil Vellala community, and Mrs. Nagammal. His family does not appear to have been in affluent circumstances¹. He began his primary education in 1896 in a Tamil School near Gandhari Amman Koil in Trivandrum. Mr. O. M. Cherian, his teacher in Government English High School, recalls that the young boy, though proficient in English and History, was very poor in Mathematics. He was of active habits. Under the emotional stress caused by the partition of Bengal, the oppressive policy of the Government and the agitation forcefully led by Lokamanya Tilak, the young Chembakaraman naturally began to evince keen interest in contemporary political events, organise the students, conduct anti-British propaganda and call on the peasants not to pay taxes.

At this time Sir John Strickland², a prosperous landlord of England, was residing in Trivandrum. He came into touch with the

1. Article by Mr. O. M. Cherian, reproduced in the *Malayala Manorama* Weekly, dated 31st March, 1956. He states that Mr. Pillai was one of his favourite students and adds that his father was getting only a small amount as his salary and staying in a house in the premises where the Accountant General's Office is now situated in Trivandrum.
2. He was a person of queer habits, states Mr. O. M. Cherian. A belief persisted that this rich man, with his property distributed in different parts of Europe, was spying on behalf of Germany though it is not clear why he was doing so. It was believed that he was closely associated with a violently anti-British secret organization in Germany and that his idea was to rouse the latent revolutionary spirit of smart young Indians, give them adequate education and training at European Universities for the sprouting of their leadership and make them participate in revolutionary activities against the British imperialism.

young Chembakaraman and offered to take him out of India and educate him in Germany. The boy left Travancore in 1908 and, having touched Tuticorin on the way, reached Colombo³ in September of that year and from there proceeded to Italy in a German ship. In Italy and Switzerland he created a happy impression about India on the European mind. He next joined the University of Berlin, of which he secured the Doctorate degree both in Political Science and Economics. He was proficient in Engineering as well.

With such academic background he plunged himself in political activity. He spoke German and French tolerably well. His knowledge of the European languages was indeed an asset in his public work. There were at this time several young Indians, with revolutionary ideals, residing in Germany. Messrs. Hardayal, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Bhupendranath Dutt, Savarkar, Krishna Varma, Raja Mahendra Pratap, Abdul Hafiz and Mohamed Barkatullah and Dr. Prabhakar were some of them. It is of special interest to note that Mr. A. C. Narayanan Nambiar, from North Malabar, also was in the progressive group. Financed by Sir John Strickland, the young Chembakaraman could easily attain a position of distinction among them, intellectually well-equipped, persevering and efficient as he was.

Before the out-break of the First World War Mr. Chembakaraman set up at Zurich an association called the International Pro-India Committee⁴. The objective of the Committee was to explain

3. Mr. Chembakaraman's letter to his father dated 24th September. It would appear that he did not leave Travancore without the knowledge of his parents or under severe police pressure, as is usually believed, for Mr. Cherian records that he had taken leave of him before his departure, taking his father also with him for the purpose. Mr. T. P. Padmanabha Pillai was another young man who proceeded to Europe along with Mr. Chembakaraman to prosecute higher studies in Vienna.
4. This Committee was managed by a Board consisting of the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, the Accountant and three Members as Assessors. Sections of the Committee might be established at any place where those interested in the aims of the Committee were present. The regular membership fee was 4 Swiss Franc per half-year, though voluntary financial help would indeed be welcome. Those exceptionally conversant with Indian problems might be appointed by the Board as Honorary Members. The application for membership, to be sent to the President, would be considered and decided on by the Board.

The office-bearers of the Board were Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai, Indologist (President), Mr. Edwin Oscar Egli, Merchant (Vice-President), Mr. Johannes Vincent Venner, Editor (Secretary), Johs. Steinmann, Solicitor (Accountant), and Messrs. Eugen Lennhoff, Journalist, Alfred Schonlang, Med., E. Kreutler, Owner of Printing Office, (Assessors).

the political conditions in India to the public, especially to the press, and to put at their disposal all "ethnographic, historic, economic, psychologic, sociologic documents and facts which are of a nature to secure knowledge of the soul, of the past and of the possibilities of the development of India". It was also intended "to promote the unification of all the peoples and races of India into a strong entity and to start an intensive social and cultural reform of all spheres of living". The Pro-India Committee's objective was to be secured by informing "each member in the compulsory bulletin 'Der Wanderer in an independent and scientific manner regarding the development and progress"; by gaining "the sympathy of the public opinion of all countries"; by assisting "missions of socialists and politicians by advice and means"; by organizing "congresses" conferences, lectures and meetings in which any actual questions concerning India are to be discussed"; and also by publishing and propagating "scientific and political essays of all kinds regarding India". The headquarters of this Committee came to be later shifted to Berlin. The English newspaper, *Pro-India* started by him as the chief purveyor of news about India in Europe gave not a little encouragement to the Indian fighters for freedom. Eminent thinkers used to contribute articles to the *Pro-India*. Mr. Chembakaraman gradually won the esteem of Kaiser William himself and came to be invited to all the secret political conferences in Germany. He worked in this manner for the liberation, with German military help, of India from the British yoke. He visited Paris after a trip to Berlin. He also went to Africa and held discussions with Gandhiji. He called on the Africans to fight for their rights and social justice.

On the out-break of the First World War he gathered the Indian revolutionaries in Berlin who were assured of full support by the German Government. Thus came into existence the Indian Independence Committee under which numerous Sub-Committees were established to function in different parts of the world. Direct contacts were also made with secret revolutionary societies in India. After signing an alliance they came into official contact with the German Foreign Office. It is perhaps surprising how he, "the first official Indian guest of Imperial Germany", came to be mixed up with the Indian revolutionaries for, as Mr. M. N. Roy records, his views had been conservative and he had become friendly with the members of the Prussian Royalist Party. His activities in Germany are, to some extent, shrouded in mystery; we do not have the full details of his collaboration with the Germans for the benefit of India or of his activities elsewhere. He was firmly of the view that India

could be liberated from the British thralldom with German help. It is of interest that his ideas coincided with those of the Irish revolutionary, Sir John Casement, living as exile in Germany.

During the First World War he served as officer in the famous German cruiser, *Emden*, which attacked British ships in the Indian Ocean, shelled military targets on the shore of Madras on 22 September, 1914 and was subsequently responsible for a number of exploits. It is said that he landed on the Indian sea coast in disguise and established contacts with the people in order to make them disaffected towards the Government. His heroic escape back to Germany should have been a veritable piece of romance.

He created a new organisation called the Indian National Volunteer Corps, its members having a distinct badge and uniform. Its objective was to persuade the Indian soldiers fighting on the borders of France, through the distribution of pamphlets and secret letters, to join the German side and also to conduct anti-British propaganda in Turkey and Persia. He himself piloted, it is said, a plane in 1915 and personally distributed copies of stirring pamphlets among the fighting soldiers.

In a message⁶ issued from Berlin on 31 July, 1915 he made a stirring call:

Your countrymen call upon you to break the chains of slavery. This is the most opportune time. Your countrymen in Hindustan are ready and they are waging guerilla warfare to avenge themselves on the hated *Feringee* yoke. Your brethren in Lahore, Amritsar, Ferozpur, Madras, Singapore and other Indian cities have already taken up arms for the liberation of your motherland. They call upon you to join in the fight. They are determined to drive out the *Feringees* from the sacred soil of Hindustan. You, who are shedding your blood for the selfish cause of the *Feringees*, should take up arms against the oppressors of your beloved Motherland.....Do not hesitate to do your duty. Your wives and children, your brothers and sisters need your help.

Mohamedan soldiers: Remember the glorious days of the Emperors of Delhi and reflect that you are now slaves of the hated English. The khalif has declared Holy War against the oppressors of your country and asks you to join hands with Hindus to save Hindusthan from ruin and shame.

Hindu and Sikh soldiers: Remember the days of the Lion of the Punjab, the great Ranjit Singh. Are you not ashamed of

6. Homage to Dr. Chembakaraman Pillai, A Patriot and Martyr, P. 9.

your servitude to the hated English or of your brethren in far off Hindusthan being put to jail, hanged, shot, insulted and persecuted by the *Feringees*? Oh! What a terrible thing it is to be slaves to alien tyranny! Awake, and show to the world that you won't tolerate this state of things any longer in your country.

Hindusthanees soldiers: Remember that the British are money grabbers and staying in India only to loot money! Remember the untold miseries and the sufferings they inflict on men and women in India. Reflect that the cowardly British would not enlist for their own war and they are forcibly recruiting the Hindusthanees in India to fight for them Remember that in times of battle the unjust and cowardly British force you to advance against the cannon's mouth and they stay behind.

Hear the waitings of your fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, wives and children, who love you so dearly. Have you, oh! Hindusthanees soldiers, no feeling for them? This is the time to revenge yourself. Remember the hero Mangal Pandey of 1857 and fight for your freedom. This is your religion. Death comes to every one, but die honourably, die for a right cause, die for your country Fight for the independence of your country.

On 1 December, 1915 Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai inaugurated the Provisional Government of Free India at Kabul, with Mr. Mahendra Pratap as President, Mr Mohamed Barkatullah as Prime Minister and himself as Foreign Minister. His scheme seems to have been to blockade the Suez Canal, crush the British navy, enter India with the help of the German army and effect the transfer of the Provisional Government of India from Kabul to Delhi. A price was fixed upon his head and it is said that Mata Hari was employed to entice him. He did not succumb to the spell of her charm and cleverly remained underground and evaded capture. But his grand plans were upset by the defeat of Germany at the hands of the Allies in 1918.

In October 1918, commenting on the Wilsonian programme of ensuring no "false peace but a just peace and the right of self-determination of the peoples", he stated⁷ that India must be justified to put the following conditions in order to avoid bloodshed in the future!

1. England must withdraw all their troops from India.
2. All administrative posts in India which are now engaged by Britishers must be replaced by Indians.

7. *Pro-India* dated 16 October, 1918.

3. Those Britishers who want to remain in India have to reveal faithfulness to India.
4. The form of government in order to avoid anarchy in the country must remain as it is till a peace treaty is signed under observation of para 2.
5. After reasonable time after the peace treaty is signed the Indian people will determine a new form of government by a national assembly.
6. India must be entitled to depute their representatives to the future Peace Conference and to represent a free nation in the League of Nations.
7. The French and the Portuguese must leave their possessions in India.
8. The integrity and self-determination of India must be recognised.

Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai was very much concerned with the problem of oppressed people in different parts of the world. In April, 1919 he stated:⁸

In this historical moment when the whole world is interested in the re-establishment of peace we consider it our duty to raise our voice on behalf of the suffering millions of Hindusthan.....The people of that country are demanding their unquestionable right of self-determination and self-government. A nation such as the Indian nation, with its glorious past and promising future, can neither be shut out from the Council of Nations nor will England be able to keep it in continued subjection. We therefore appeal to the world at large not to overlook the desperate efforts of our people to attain their freedom.

Where is the justice which Mr. Wilson and his associates so proudly speak of when every attempt to break the chains of slavery is punished mercilessly? Our appeal to the English sense of justice and fair-play has not proved of much effect beyond eliciting promises of future reforms. If the Paris Conference means to bring about an effective reconciliation of nations, then the question of India and other countries in the same position must be also laid before the Peace Tribunal. The two Indians now in Paris do not represent Indian public opinion in any sense as they are tools in the hands of their British

8. Letter to the *Continental Times*, dated 30 April, 1919.

masters. We protest against European public opinion being misled with regard to the Indians at the Peace Conference.....

The people of India openly demand the right of taking the reins of the government in their own hands. And this will be theirs in the end.

The colonial problem of India, as he conceived it, could not be isolated from the wider struggle of other peoples against their imperialist oppressors. In 1919 along with the American author, Mr. Edwin Emerson, he organised therefore the League of the Oppressed People. In the Manifesto of this League it was declared:

I. We affirm our adherence to the principle that every people, conscious of its political unity and individuality, has an inherent and inalienable right to shape its own domestic institutions and to determine its relations with other peoples.

We maintain that the principle of self-determination is not only founded upon the common sentiment of right and justice but is fundamental to the welfare of humanity as a whole. We hold that there can be no permanent or successful League of Nations and no stable peace in the world so long as one people is held in subjection to another.

II. We declare the relations between subject peoples and the alien powers that rule them to be a matter of international concern and that no such power has a right to resist inquiry into the manner in which it imposes its rule upon aliens.

We further maintain that the suppression of national protests against foreign rule or foreign intervention by means of military violence, torture, deportation, police oppression, domestic espionage, political censorship, agents provocateurs and starvation blockades is an unpardonable offence against humanity.

III. In pursuance of these recognized modern principles we shall help as best as we can any oppressed people to achieve its own liberation. With this purpose in view we aim to collect and disseminate information on the conditions and aspirations of oppressed peoples; to co-operate with their representatives and all organizations both here and abroad whose aims are similar to ours; to uphold the right of asylum of political refugees against the persecutions of foreign governments to the end:

That a sound and well-informed public opinion may be created on all matters pertaining to the development of freedom of the peoples now under alien rule, so that liberal forces of the

world shall together achieve the liberty and self-government and the undictated development of all peoples, thus laying a better foundation for the peace of the world.

Branches of the League were established at different centres in the world in connection with which he is stated to have made a tour of the Far East Asia, South East Asia, Middle East, South Africa and America.

He hailed the Khilafat Movement that had effected a sense of fraternity between the Hindus and the Muslims, as well as the Non-Co-operation and *Swadeshi* Movements. The problem of the oppressed people, to him, was never localised but universal. He hoped¹⁰ that "the German people, in spite of the difficult situation they are inwill be able to muster enough moral force to do their share for the benefit of humanity and the suppressed people". He utilised the columns of the *Pro-India* to condemn racialism and imperialist oppression. He warned the English colonists of East Africa against committing the unjustifiable mistakes as done in South Africa and asserted that on account of the awakening of the Indian sub-consciousness the East African movement had become one with the All-India problem and that whether "it is in the far away Fiji Islands or in the South or East Africa the Indian hearts beat in harmony". He demanded equal justice for all. He predicted that under the changed circumstances the British rule in India, based on the "brutal force of bureaucracy" would not continue for long. In a speech¹¹ on the treatment of Indians in Kenya he asserted: "The Indian people demand their freedom with one voice. The time for appealing and begging is dwindling fast and let us hope that the day is not far off when India will be free and will participate as a free and equal partner in Council of Nations. We don't fight only for a Free India, but also for the freedom of all the suppressed people of the world and therefore say, 'Long Live Freedom For All The Nations'." In a press interview in Germany he stated¹²:

"The Indian nation and its relationship to the outside world has undergone a great change lately. India has learnt that except the subordinated people it has no honest friends in the world. India does not depend any more on the sympathies or antipathies of Europe. It is convinced that it can be saved only by its own efforts.....We don't want other nations to mix up in our affairs in the same way as we do abstain from mixing

10. Letter from the Editor '*Pro-India*' to Dr. Scheidemann dated 16 February, 1919.

11. Homage to Dr. Chambakaraman Pillai, A Patriot and Martyr, P. 13.

12. *Ibid*, P. 12.

in the affairs of others. Help and offers of friendship are welcome. In our fight for independence we hope for the practical co-operation of all right thinking people.....We do not wish for the Anglo-American dollars or the Italian or French coquetry or militarism that wants to rule the world..... We are trying honestly to beautify the whole world....

In 1920 he organised the Orient Club in Berlin in association with the late Talak Pasha, the grand vizier of Turkey during the First World War. He championed the cause of the Negro community in the United States of America.

Absolutely secular in outlook and opposed to petty political intrigues, personal jealousies, communal wrangles, religious disputes and regional claims, Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai could only think of "one India—a United Greater India." "To work for this India", he said in course of an interview, "to belong to it and to serve it is my ambition in life". He drafted the resolution that the Indian residents in Berlin passed at a meeting held on 5 February, 1922:

"Whereas the peace of world hinges on a satisfactory solution of the Indian question for which that country is passing through a critical period of her history;

"Whereas the united and persistent efforts of the Indian masses will result not only in the complete independence of India which is her birthright to attain, but also in the collapse of the British imperial capitalistic system and thus bring about the political, economic and social emancipation of all countries suffering under British despotism and terrorism;

"Be it resolved that the Indian residents in Berlin extend their full support to the Independence Movement in India by all possible means and urge the Indian National Congress not to come to any terms with the British Government until and unless the complete and absolute independence of India is recognised.

"Whereas the Indian people are suffering and struggling in their march towards the attainment of freedom:

"Whereas their sufferings have brought about a new lease of life in India and have awakened among the rank and file a genuine desire to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the country and freedom;

"Be it resolved that the Indian residents in Berlin, while conveying their hearty congratulations to all those thousands of Indian comrades who, have preferred being hanged, shot, deported and sent to rigorous imprisonment rather than tolerate any longer the British domination, express their sincere

sympathy with them and hail them as heroes and martyrs to the cause of liberty and independence”.

When Mr. M. N. Roy met Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai at Berlin in 1922 all his old associates had transferred their loyalty, from the Government of Kaiser to the Russian Government. Some of them claimed to be communists. As far as Germany was concerned he tolerated more the autocratic monarchical Government than the new Government. With the help of Count Von Rivert Law he was given the membership of the Pan-German Nationalist Party, the greatest honour that a foreigner could aspire to get in Germany. Mr. M. N. Roy testifies to the qualities of his hospitality that could be found only in those Indians who had lived in Europe for a long time. It would appear that Mr. Bhupendranath Dutt of the Indian Revolutionary Socialist Party at Berlin used to warn Mr. M. N. Roy against Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai as the latter was on friendly terms with the German Royalist Military Party and might betray him.

For all Indian leaders who visited Germany Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai was the primary centre of attraction. Mr. K. M. Panikkar, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had met him there. In 1926, according to Mr. K. M. Panikkar, the Indian residents in Berlin were divided into two camps, the communist camp led by Mr. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and Mr. A. C. Narayanan Nambiar and the other by Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai, who was much popular among the conservatives and the trading class. Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai is said to have told Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose when they met in 1933 that considering the possibility of another World War, the Indian Political aspirations, under the existing conditions, would be realised only through the effective organisation of an Indian National Army outside India and the close association of Indians with revolutionaries in Asia ranged against British imperialism¹³. On his visit to Germany Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was not much impressed by the Indian political exiles though, of course, it was true that they had sacrificed and suffered much: the Nazi regime since early 1933 had considerably added to their misfortunes. He refers to Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai as “a prominent member of the old war-time group”, “rather pompous”, so much so that “young Indian students had given him an irreverent title”¹⁴. An ardent nationalist, Mr. Pillai was incapable of approaching problems from a social or economic angle, he adds. He was

13. Mr. Bose gave Mr. Pillai's dream a concrete shape and pursued the line chalked out by him. The Azad Hind Government and the Azad Hind Fouj were based on Mr. Pillai's blueprints.

14. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, P. 153.

found to be perfectly at home with the German Nationalists, the Steelhelmets—one of the few Indians who got on well with the Nazis.

Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai did much, after the First World War, to develop trade relations between India and Germany. In 1924 he organised the first exhibition abroad of Indian *swadeshi* goods at the Leipzig International Fair.¹⁵ He was keen on India's industrial expansion. His appointment, in 1930, as the representative in Berlin, of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries, was only a recognition of the silent work he had been doing for years. It was through his good offices exclusively that half the business between India and Germany was transacted in those days¹⁶. He worked cheerfully for the realization of his great project, which contemplated to institute Indo-European Commercial Offices in the great centres of our continent and the constitution of mixed chambers of Commerce, Indo-European, in the large countries of the old world¹⁷. He had also a project of creating an Italo-India Chamber of Commerce, looked upon with great sympathy even by economists. As a brilliant engineer too he was often consulted by industrial circles in Germany.

In 1933 he married Smt. Lakshmi Bhai whom he had met in Berlin¹⁸. Unfortunately the wedded life was not destined to be long. He soon fell ill; there were symptoms of slow poisoning¹⁹. He went to Italy for treatment. He also visited the tomb of Mazzini, where "he wept for a long time, exalting in himself the destiny of a great man who was able to sacrifice a long and most pure life for the redemption of his beloved country". Deprived of his precious art collection, persecuted by the Nazis on his return to Germany, his adopted land, and much reduced in regard to his financial resources, he expired on 26 May 1934, a broken-hearted man²⁰.

15. Kamla Mankekar in the *Sunday Standard*, 16 February, 1964.

16. Statement by Reinhold Wulle, 1 October, 1933.

17. Translation of statement by the Minister of Commerce, Italy, in the *Courier Diplomatique Consulaire*, Rome, 30 November, 1934.

18. She had spent her early days in Calcutta. She reached Berlin with the help of a Russian friend. Mr. Purushothamdas Thakurdas was present at the wedding.

19. It is said that on one occasion when Herr Hitler contemptuously commented that India was unfit for self-government, Mr. Pillai got excited and expatiated on her glory. The Nazis never thereafter pardoned him.

20. His last wish was to travel home in an Indian battle ship, "flying the colours of the free Indian republic". The Nazis, on his death, kept Mrs. Pillai in custody but she was able to escape to Bombay in 1935, after touching Spain and Italy on the way. She safely brought his ashes to India.

Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai had left Travancore as a boy and was destined never to re-visit his beloved native land. The thought of Travancore made him deeply emotional. He kept up occasional correspondence with his people at home²¹.

Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai understood well that the balance of power, maintained in the eighteenth century by Governments on the European continent, "depends today on colonial expansion" and that the fate of Europe "is decided by events happening in Morocco, Indo-China and Tibet". A knowledge of Indian politics was essential for intelligent citizenship in Europe so far as "India is the very bedrock of the colonial question". He predicted that the crumbling of the British empire would precipitate a political earthquake that would change the map of the world.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad says that Mr. Pillai "was amongst the pioneers who sought to attain the objective by new methods. Whatever the ultimate assessment of history with regard to the exploits of the revolutionary leaders..... may be, there can be no two opinions that a passion for freedom of India and heroic courage inspired these efforts..... Mr. Pillai made a distinctive contribution in a constructive way after World War. I by his work aimed at enlisting the goodwill of the people of many lands for the Indian freedom movement Indian political leaders of all schools of thought were struck by his devotion and intensity of his passion for Indian freedom". His words and deeds were the dream of Indian youth. Through his speeches, writings and personal contacts he collected friends who sympathised with India's cause. He took up every cause that appealed to his sense of justice. Mr. S. K. Patil says he was "the greatest of revolutionaries who really carried the Torch of Freedom to foreign

21. On 30 January, 1923 he wrote to his father from Berlin: "..... I regret very much that I did not write to you for so many years and I am sure you would understand my reasons, knowing the nature of my activities for the sake of our enslaved motherland and the emancipation of her suffering millions. It is not possible for me to give you a description of my work and experiences in the various countries I have travelled or of what I propose to undertake in the near future. Certain it is that I must stay for some time yet to come in Berlin or somewhere else in Germany itself unless circumstances would compel me to take my residence elsewhere. You can rest assured that I will not stay out of India a moment longer than it is absolutely necessary and it may be even probable that I may return to my dear ones sooner than we all may expect. In any case I beg you all, more particularly you, my dear father, not to worry about me. I feel sure that before long I will be with you and try to make you all happy to the best of my ability....."

countries". Cast in the mould of Mazzini, this doyen of revolutionaries and dynamo in action, passionately worked with no hope of reward and blazed a new trail. The German Nationalist Leader, Reinhold Wulle, says that "he brought India nearer to us, for which Germans and Indians remain obliged to him in understanding gratitude".

Much of the correspondence and other personal records of Mr. Chembakaraman Pillai have been lost and it is therefore not possible to give a comprehensive and chronological account of all his activities. He remains a legendary hero. He was led by his own light and always held his head high. He worked out his strange destiny in a foreign country. India did not go along the path that he had pursued or adopt the method that he had chosen for attaining the goal of political liberation. But here was a person who never released his grip on nationalism in the midst of his adventures and escapades and who never spent a moment of his life except in the light of love of freedom and social justice. He was essentially a humanist. It is not for us, at this distance of time, to comment on the correctness of his actions. The fact remains that he projected the picture of India on the Western mind and generated a genuine sympathy for her cause in those formative days of the national struggle for liberation. As Mr. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya says,

"It is for us to hold that gift in trust

And be inspired by the thought of him

CHAPTER 6

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN TRAVANCORE

It is desirable at this stage to trace briefly the constitutional development in Travancore until 1922 before we pass on to the early political developments in Malabar, to be described in the next chapter.

During the eight decades that followed the insurrection of 1809 the last vestiges of the old popular bodies in Travancore had been crushed. The Village Assemblies and *Sabha Yogams* that had formerly played an effective role in local affairs were rendered impotent by the administration that came to be highly centralised in character in the State. A succession of Dewans, unfamiliar with the customs and traditions of the country, managed the public affairs without the advantage of intimate association with the people or any appreciation or knowledge of their sentiments or needs. The selection of officers was based on no definite principle. Some of the Dewans were, no doubt, men of eminence but they relied more on their own capacity and information than on popular co-operation. A few of them, coming from outside the State, toyed with the pre-conceived notion that everything was out of order in Travancore and they were only too ready to engraft laws on the Statute Book in faithful imitation of those which were adopted in British India. Legislation was becoming an important aspect of administration so far as the old customs were dying out and new habits of life and thought were becoming prominent. The enlightened policy pursued by the Government in diffusing the benefits of education naturally resulted in the extension of the political vision of the people.

During the rule of Visakham Tirunal Maharaja (1880-85) the Dewan, Mr. V. Rama Iyengar invited the leading land-holders of the State to Trivandrum and addressing them on 24 March 1883 stated¹ that the object of the Government was to explain to them the details of the introduction of land survey and revenue settlement and to afford them an opportunity to discuss and form their own opinions on the various problems allied to it. He sought their co-operation in the prosecution of an undertaking intimately connected with the agricultural interests. Instructions were issued to direct respectable persons to meet the Dewan at his camps while on tour²

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1. Administration Report, Travancore, 1883-84.
 2. Travancore State Manual, Vol. II, P. 682.

Mr. T. Rama Rao, the next Dewan, (1887-92) was satisfied that such persons were willingly co-operating with the Government.

On the demise of the Maharaja on 4 August 1885 he was succeeded to the *gadi* by Rama Varma, Sri Mulam Tirunal Maharaja³ who shaped the edifice of his own fame on the foundations laid by his predecessors. A constitutional monarch by temperament, he chalked out a bold policy that enabled the representatives of his subjects to offer their suggestions and constructive criticism in the promulgation of laws. On 16 February, 1887 when the golden jubilee of the reign of Queen Victoria was celebrated in the State and public *darbar* held, the Viceroy in his *kharita* promised⁴ to "support your (the Maharaja's) authority and enhance your personal consideration" and the Maharaja acknowledged: "To the influence of Her Majesty's supremacy is due.....whatever of prosperity and enlightenment Travancore has attained to; for her representatives have guided our footsteps in the path of progress and her countrymen have contributed largely to raise our people and develop her resources".

The reigning monarch was deemed to be the supreme legislative authority and laws were, from time to time, passed as Proclamations or Regulations, the Ruler acting on the advice of the Dewan, as in all other matters of the State. The Dewan was the Maharaja's Chief Minister and responsible adviser with whom the British Resident corresponded on the one hand, and the Heads of Departments, on the other, in all official matters. The various Departments were constituted on the British model. The work of legislation was conducted in the *Huzur* Office until 1888. In that year, for the first time in the history of any Indian State, a Legislative Council was constituted by Regulation to feel the pulse of the people of Travancore.⁵

At the time of the establishment of the Council it was clearly pointed out that the Dewan should have the benefit of discussing with and taking the opinion of respectable persons in matters of legislation which, being one of the most important functions of the Government, should receive the most careful consideration before submission to the sovereign for final approval. Trained, as he was, from his early days as an administrator, Mr. Rama Rao could think only of taking the opinion of responsible officers. But the Maharaja who had a clearer vision of the democratic possibilities of the future insisted that provision should be made for the representation of non-official elements as well.

3. Administration Report, Travancore, 1884-85.

4. *Ibid*, 1886-87.

5. Appendix I to the Dewan's letter to the Agent to the Governor-General, dated 14 February, 1927.

The Legislative Council thus inaugurated was to consist of the Dewan as President⁶ and a number of Members, not less than five or more than eight. The Members were to be nominated, out of whom not less than two were to be non-officials. The Council was purely a deliberative body, with no administrative function. It enjoyed plenary powers of legislation, the only restriction being that in introducing a measure affecting the public revenues of the State, the Member concerned should obtain the previous sanction of the Dewan. No Bill passed by the Council would be law unless the Maharaja gave his assent to be "duly proclaimed by the Dewan in the Government Gazette". He could disallow any Bill passed by the Council and render it ineffective. No reservation was made for the passing of any Regulation directly by the Maharaja. In fact, as many as fifteen Proclamations were made directly by him during the period, 1888-98.

After the Act of 1892 was passed by the British Parliament, Travancore was not slow to follow the example of British India. In 1898 was passed the Legislative Council Regulation of great constitutional importance to the State. By this Regulation the minimum number of Members was raised from five to eight⁷, excluding the Dewan, and the maximum from eight to fifteen, the proportion of non-officials being fixed at two-fifths of the total number. It was believed that six non-official Members would be sufficient for a long time to come, to secure representation of the important communities residing in Travancore. The Dewan could frame rules under section V in regard to the conditions under which all or any of the non-official Members might be elected by the people. Power was reserved to the Ruler to decline to nominate into the Council any elected Member of questionable character. Though the re-constitution of the Council was definitely a progressive step, the reform contained a reactionary aspect as well so far as some restrictions were imposed on the legislative powers of the Council and certain subjects were taken out of its jurisdiction. The previous sanction of the Dewan was made necessary not only in regard to the measures affecting the public revenue but also those affecting the religion or usages of any class of the Maharaja's subjects. The Council was forbidden to entertain any measure affecting the Ruling Family, relations with the Paramount Power, matters governed by treaties, conventions or agreements already concluded, extradition of criminals, European vagrants and European British Subjects, Sea Ports, British Post Office, Telegraph, Nair Brigade and the Maharaja's Bodyguard. It was supposed

6. In his absence the senior official Member present would preside.

7. During 1903-04 the minimum number of Members was raised from 8 to 10 by the addition of one official Member and one non-official Member. (Administration Report, August 1903-August 1904).

that the council would not be able to deal with these subjects in a way calculated to secure satisfactory or uniform results. Thus the sphere of the Legislative Council was strictly confined to subjects of non-political and local character. Altogether, the main object in 1898 was to define the powers of the Council.

In spite of section V of the Regulation, no rules were framed under it and the principle of election for which provision was made in the Regulation was never put into effect.⁸

There were express provisions by which the Dewan was to make Regulations and submit them for the Maharaja's approval. The Emergency Regulations to be made by him, having the same force as the Regulations passed by the Council, were to be valid for six months only. From these provisions the non-official circles tried to derive a constitutional convention that the Maharaja could not ordinarily exercise his prerogative of legislation except in regard to the Reserved Subjects or in an emergency. On the other hand it was also argued that constitutionally, according to section XII of the Regulation, the Council was only a subordinate body and that the Maharaja was the supreme legislative authority in the State. The validity of some of the Proclamations and Regulations directly issued by the Maharaja became a matter of doubt and on three occasions the High Court of Travancore expressed its opinion that the sole legislative authority in the State was the Legislative Council and that the Ruler enjoyed no power to legislate except on Reserved Subjects and on occasions of emergency. In these cases, however, there were no judicial decisions but only *obiter dicta*. Anyway the Government took up the matter and considered the need for amending the Regulation so as to clarify the point at issue. When the matter was referred to the Government of Madras they wrote:

"His Excellency, the Governor in Council has, after very careful consideration, come to the conclusion that His Highness the Maharaja, by establishing a Legislative Council, has not abandoned His prerogative of legislation".

On the question of amending the Regulation the Government of Madras further gave their advice to the Government of Travancore:⁹

8. Since 1908 four of the non-official Members, one for each of the revenue Divisions of Padmanabhapuram, Trivandrum, Quilon and Kottayam, were appointed on the recommendation of the Members of Shri Mulam Popular Assembly. Practically the Assembly Members of each Division of the State became the electing body. The fifth Member was generally appointed since 1911 on the recommendation of the Planters of Devikulam.

9. Letter No. 18 dated 1 October, 1911 from the Resident.

"It is however neither necessary nor expedient for His Highness to make any public declaration of His right to legislate independently of the Council. I am accordingly to advise the *Durbar* not to proceed with the proposed Regulation to declare that His Highness the Maharaja's power to enact laws, Regulations and Orders by Proclamation is not affected by the creation of the Legislative Council. If His Highness's right to legislate should hereafter be authoritatively denied by the Full Court it may then be necessary to legislate on the lines proposed but until that contingency arises. H.E. the Governor-in-Council is of opinion that no action of the kind proposed should be taken".

Meanwhile in 1904 on the initiative and advice of the Dewan, Mr. V. P. Madhava Rao, another institution, the Shri Mulam Popular Assembly, was inaugurated by the Maharaja by an Executive Order of the Government¹⁰. It was a House of People's representatives, constituted with a view to "afford an opportunity to the people of expressing direct to the Government their wants and wishes and representing their views regarding the administrative measures adopted by Government from time to time"¹¹. The Government would thereby be enabled to learn at first hand how their action affected the people and also to gain the benefit of suggestions made by the popular representatives in regard to the measures necessary for the promotion of administrative efficiency and the amelioration of the condition of the people.

The Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, of which the President was the Dewan, was inaugurated on Saturday, 22 October, 1904. It was constituted of the representatives of the land-holders and merchants in the State¹². The Members were selected by the Government on the recommendation of the Division Peishkars. There were to be two representatives of the agricultural, trading and industrial interests from each Taluk from among land-holders who paid on their own account an annual land revenue of not less than Rs 100 and land-holders or traders whose net annual income was Rs 6,000 or above. The Municipalities of Trivandrum, Nagercoil, Quilon, Kottayam and Alleppey and such public bodies and Associations as in the opinion of the Government should be represented in the Assembly were invited to send a member each. Persons below eighteen years of age, those who were of unsound mind or were convicted of a criminal offence indicating a bad or immoral character, and dismissed officials were

10. This was in accordance with the scheme sanctioned by the Maharaja in Proceedings No. 60, Political, dated 1 October, 1904.

11. Administration Report, Travancore, 1904-05.

12. *Ibid.*

declared ineligible to vote or to be nominated as Members of the Assembly. Government servants were declared ineligible for Membership as the object of the Assembly was to elicit non-official opinion. The Principal officers of the State and Heads of Departments would however be invited to be present. The meeting of the Assembly was to be held at Trivandrum every year soon after the Maharaja's birthday. It was the duty of the Members to bring their requirements, wishes or grievances before the Government for proper consideration and make the policy of the Government better known among the people. The Assembly was a body¹³ based, more or less, on wealth and profession.

Addressing the first session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly the Dewan told the Members that it was the first of its kind ever convened in Travancore and that it was the outcome of the solicitude of the Maharaja "to ascertain at first hand the wants and wishes of His people through their representatives and also to elicit their opinion, as far as may be, regarding the various measures for the better government of the country". As it was the first year and as the intervals between the constitution of the Assembly and the date fixed for its meeting was short it was not possible to do more than select the Members on the lines laid down in the scheme. The Dewan hoped that it might be found possible to create an electorate during the second year and also lay down rules for the deliberations and discussions in the Assembly¹⁴.

The Dewan frankly told them:

"Whether the Assembly shall be entrusted with the power of electing non-official Members to the Legislative Council which some of the more enthusiastic of the well-wishers of the State seem to think should have been granted at the very outset depends a great deal upon yourselves. If your representations and discussions are marked by selfrestraint, moderation and good sense this power is bound to come in good time. On the other hand there have not been wanting misgivings in some quarters as to whether the people are sufficiently advanced for the creation of an Assembly constituted even on its present basis. I need not assure you that Government do not share these misgivings. In point of general intelligence, interest in public affairs, genuine love of country and above all, devotion to the ruling sovereign there are few countries in India that can claim rivalry with Travancore. The possession of these virtues so

13. There were 32 Members from Kottayam Division, 29 from Quilon Division, 12 from Trivandrum Division and 12 from the Southern Division, making a total of 85. (Proceedings of the first meeting of the Assembly).

14. Proceedings of the First Meeting of the Assembly.

essential to good citizenship is a sufficient guarantee that you will conduct yourselves in such a manner as to fully justify the trust, so graciously placed in you.....¹⁵."

During 1905-06 the Maharaja granted to the people of Travancore the privilege of electing the Members of the Assembly. 66 members were elected from the various Taluks¹⁶ in the State; the five Municipalities were given proper representation while 19 Associations¹⁷ representing approved public interests were each permitted to depute a Member to the Assembly. There was also provision for the Government to nominate not more than 10 Members to represent any interest or community, not otherwise represented by the elected Members. When the Assembly met in session in October, 1905, it opened with an address by the Dewan on the working of the several Departments and the measures proposed for the year. The suggestions and representations previously prepared and forwarded by the Members¹⁸ were next taken up one by one.

15. Proceedings of the First Meeting of the Assembly.
16. The thirty-one Taluks in the State were each constituted into an electorate sending two Members though a few important Taluks were given additional representation. Thus Padmanabhapuram District with 5 Taluks returned 11 Members; Trivandrum District with 4 Taluks 9 Members; Quilon District with 11 Taluks, 23 Members; and Kottayam District with 11 Taluks, 23 Members. Every person who paid on his own account an annual land revenue of fifty rupees or whose net income was not less than three thousand rupees per year was entitled to vote. Besides every graduate of any recognised University having his residence in the Taluk was permitted to take part in the elections. The elections were conducted under the supervision of the Tahsildars. Persons qualified as above in a Taluk were to meet at the headquarters of that Taluk on a specified day, of which previous notice of not less than one month would be given; they then would elect the Members for the Taluk to attend the Assembly during that year. The elected persons would continue to be Members of the Assembly till the next election. (Proceedings of the Government of H. H. the Maharaja of Travancore dated 1 May 1905).
17. They included European Planters' Associations. An Association must contain at least one hundred members who should not be Government servants. At least 75 members must attend the meeting held for nominating a Member. The representatives of the Municipalities and the Association would be Members of the Assembly for one year only.
18. The Members were to forward them first to the Peishkars of their respective divisions who would submit them to the Dewan with their comments on each proposition. A statement of action taken on the representations made at the previous session was for the first time prepared and furnished to each Member only at the 23rd session of the Assembly that met in February, 1927.

The number of Members in the Assembly varied from year to year. During 1907-08 there were 99 members in the Assembly¹⁹ and during 1908-09, 82 Members²⁰. Though the elective principle was introduced, the House could not really be called a Popular Assembly. About the Assembly Henry Bruce observed in 1909:

"The constitution and the working of the Assembly shows that however genuinely popular it may be, it is neither legislative nor executive nor widely representative. No such body would, for a moment, satisfy the modern agitators in British India. In order to elect or to be elected a person has essentially to have a yearly income of 3,000 rupees....."²¹

This statement need not cause any surprise because all contemporary constitutional legislation in India insisted on high property qualification for voters and candidates. Anyway, though based on restricted franchise, the Council and the Assembly with their limited powers helped to arouse political consciousness among the people. Their wants and wishes were ascertained. The representatives brought ideas of improving the administration to the Assembly and went back to their constituencies with the benefit derived from discussions on the floor of the House. There were very few measures of legislative and administrative policy adopted by the Government which had not either originated in the Assembly or derived their importance by the strength of its recommendation.

During the year 1909-10 the franchise qualification was reduced so that those whose net annual income was not less than Rs. 2,000 also got the right to vote. Each Member was allowed to bring forward two subjects in the Assembly. During 1910-11 there were 80 Members in the Assembly. The 33 Taluks with which the State was then divided returned 43 members.

During 1911-12 Travancore continued to be divided into 33 Taluks for which 43 Members were allowed as in the previous year. The Town Improvement Committees, the Planters' Associations, mercantile and trading classes and the *Jemis* (landlords) were also allowed to depute, 13, 3, 6 and 3 Members respectively to the Assembly. The Government nominated 22 Members. Thus altogether there were 90 members. During 1912-13 there was no change in the number

19. 66 Members from the Taluks; 5 from the Municipalities; 18 deputed by representative Associations and 10 nominated by the Government. (See Proceedings of the Fourth Session of the Assembly).

20. 66 from the Taluks; 5 deputed by the Town Improvement Committees; 6 deputed by the Associations; and 5 nominated by the Government.

21. Letters from Malabar p. XXVI.

of representatives from the Taluks but the Town Improvement Committees, mercantile and trading classes and *Jenmis* were allowed to be represented by a total number of 34 Members while the Government nominees numbered 23.

Political ideas penetrated the interior of the country very slowly. But the popularity of English education led to the ready acceptance of new ideas by the generality of the people. In 1915 we come across a proposal to start an all-Travancore political organisation for the cultivation of public opinion and the discussion of matters connected with the well-being of the people. The press in Travancore strongly supported it as the fulfilment of a long-felt want. It was certainly desirable that the people should unite on a common platform for the advancement of common aims and aspirations. If such an organisation had actually come into being and taken root in the political soil at that time, communal considerations might not have assumed undesirable proportions as they did in later days, and the progress towards a fully responsible government might have been quicker.

The general political awakening in the State soon manifested itself in the agitation for the reform of the Legislative Council in 1919. Already during the year 1912-13 the strength of the Council had been expanded from 10 to 15. There were 8 official and 7 non-official Members in that body. On 6 September, 1919 the Maharaja issued a Proclamation by which the number of Members in the Council was raised from 15 to 25. The strength of the non-official element was fixed at not less than two-fifths. The Regulation granted the people the right of electing Members to the Council while reserving to the Government the right of nominating some of the non-official Members. The franchise was considerably lowered and widened so as to admit as large a number of people as possible within the electorate. This was a salutary step in respect of all communities and the extension of the right of franchise to women was of unique importance though it was only an act of justice²². The elective principle was recognised and separate representation given to special interests by providing for the nomination of their representatives. The privileges of putting questions on matters of public interest and participating in the preparation of the budget were accorded to the representatives. These privileges might be regarded as instruments of great

22. The women in Kerala were in better circumstances than their sisters elsewhere in India. They were educated and many of them proved their capacity for successful leadership in liberal professions and in humbler callings. Many of them rose to high rank in Government service. The Maharaja resolved to initiate a policy of giving them a larger share in politics as well. But there was prohibition against a woman standing for election as a Member of the Legislature.

potentiality, calculated to give the people an appreciable share in administration.

Thus the Legislative Council, originally called into existence in 1888, now came to be re-modelled. Two issues of constitutional importance had come up for serious consideration before the passing of the new Regulation. The first was whether the Regulation should have been passed through the existing Council or whether it could be promulgated by the Maharaja; the second was whether there should be any reservation or declaration of the Maharaja's powers to legislate independently of the Council.

Mr. K. Srinivasa Iyengar, Advocate General, Madras, when consulted on the matter, expressed his views thus:

"that the Maharaja has plainly purported to part with his legislative power, subject to specified exceptions, restrictions and safeguards, in favour of a Legislative Council;

that such a Legislature is subordinate to his legislative authority;

that in law he retains in as ample a manner as before 1888 the sovereign power of legislation;

that he has deliberately established a convention and given an assurance that without the consent of the Legislative Council he will neither over rule the exercise of its power except of course by his veto nor change its constitution so as to curtail its powers; that the appropriate procedure for amending the constitution of the Council and giving it enlarged powers is to adopt the same procedure as was adopted in 1898; and lastly;

that it is legally right and necessary expressly to provide in the proposed Regulation that the Legislative Council shall neither have nor be deemed ever to have had any power to amend or alter its constitution, except its own rules of business, and that nothing in the new Regulation or any previous Regulation shall affect or be deemed over to have affected the sovereign power of legislation which is now declared to be and to have been always possessed and retained in all matters by the Maharaja"

However the Government of India differed from the learned Advocate General's opinion and their view was:

"The Government of India are in a position of peculiar responsibility in this matter as, in some sense, Trustees for the heirs and successors of each Ruler and they would therefore deprecate any action which might have the effect of prejudicing in any way a decision on the general question when it eventually arises. For this reason they consider that if H.H. the Maharaja

is convinced of the necessity of vindicating publicly of his sovereign prerogative of legislation it would be preferable for him to declare the revised constitution of his Council by Regulation or Edict as he did in the first instance in 1888, ignoring the *obiter dictum* of the High Court, possibly with a view to check further conjecture by the High Court as to the nature of the powers conferred on the Council; the *Durbar* might be able to arrange that the Council, after issue of Proclamation, should present His Highness a dutiful address accepting the constitution in terms which would make it plain that they claim for their body no greater rights than those accorded to them by the Proclamation.²³

Eventually it was on the basis of this advice tendered through the Government of Madras that the Maharaja directly promulgated the Regulation on 6 September, 1919. The Dewan in his address to the Council on 12 September, stated: "The enlargement of the Legislative Council on a representative basis and the extension of its functions on a deliberative plan will mark a definite epoch in the political progress of the country. There has been no more momentous occasion in the annals of this council.....". On 24th October, 1919 a set of rules was issued under which the Council came to be composed of 24 members i. e., 13 officials and 11 non-officials, of whom eight were the elected representatives of the people and three were nominated by the Government. The franchise was fairly broad-based.²⁴ The right of interpellation was granted as well as that of discussion of the annual budget though some items in the latter were removed from the cognizance of the Council. As regards legislation, the powers of the Council, according to the rules, remained practically unchanged, subject however to the limitation that it could not change its own constitution.

An acrimonious controversy ensued in which the newspapers presented the *pros* and *cons* of the problems involved in the new constitutional reform. In spite of some of the progressive aspects of the new Regulation the political leaders were still dissatisfied with the measure. Leaders like Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai took exception to the manner in which the reform was ushered in. They started an agitation more against the method than against the principle of reform. It was argued that the method adopted was

23. Confidential Letter No. 23/19 dated 7 August 1919, from the Resident.

24. A person was qualified to vote if he paid land revenue of not less than Rs 25 or enjoyed an annual income of Rs 2000 or was a graduate of ten years' standing.

a violation of accepted convention, a repudiation of right already delegated to the Legislature and therefore unconstitutional and at variance with precedents. The reservation of the prerogative in the Maharaja to make law independent of the Council was characterised as a breach of promise to and infringement of the rights of the people.

The political leaders asserted that the establishment of the Legislative Council should itself be deemed an irrevocable delegation of legislative authority by the Maharaja and that the new Regulation was not lawfully promulgated. Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai spear-headed the agitation. Several public meetings were held in different parts of the State and an influential committee of leading men was formed to continue the agitation.

The pro-Government leaders like Mr. Malloor K. Govinda Pillai and Mr. T. K. Velu Pillai pointed out that a Royal Proclamation was as valid as any Act passed with the consent of the Legislative Council and that the highest judicial tribunal in the State had upheld the legality of such Proclamations, the sovereign being the source of law. The loyalists organised a rival faction and held a public meeting at Tambanur Hall in Trivandrum to vindicate the position of the Government. The orderliness of the meeting was however disturbed by the tumultuous behaviour of students whose sympathies were with the agitation launched by Mr. Parameswaran Pillai. The agitation had obviously aroused the passions of the youth who struck a responsive chord and plunged into its vortex with exuberance. The loyalist-royalist organisers of the meeting sought the help of the police but there was so much of uproar that the meeting ended in fiasco. Newspapers like the *Malayali* and the *Samadarshi* were highly critical of the loyalists. A ring of protests followed and the agitation gathered momentum.

As regards the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, during the year 1922-23 every person who paid an annual land revenue of not less than rupees 50 or whose net annual income was not less than Rs. 2,000 and every graduate of recognised University of not less than ten years' standing and having residence in the Taluk came to be given franchise. The Taluks continued to return 43 Members while the Municipal Councils, Planters' Associations, mercantile and trading classes and the *Jennis* were allowed to depute 19, 4, 7 and 4 Members respectively to the Assembly. The nominees of the Government numbered 23. Thus there were 100 Members in all, each of whom was permitted to bring forward two subjects at the legislative session. The Assembly with its non-official majority became altogether more representative of popular will than earlier. Women now became eligible to sit in the House²⁵.

25. Even in England and the U. S. A. women got enfranchisement only as a reward for their service rendered during the first World War.

The Travancore Election Offences and Enquiries Law of 1922 tried to remove the charges of corruption and malpractice as far as possible. Formerly the election disputes were handled by the Government. The principle of independent election demanded that a body of persons trained in law and possessing a judicial frame of mind should decide election disputes. This body known as the Election Commission was given the powers of a civil court.

Much that the Government was able to do for the amelioration of the condition of the people was indirectly ascribable to the personal contact between the Government and their representatives. The Assembly amounted to an annual assertion of the people's right, made manifest by their representations through its members, to be well governed.

The Maharaja studied the working of constitutional reforms in British India and was alive to the necessity of granting a larger measure of rights to the people of Travancore than before. Thus in 1922 he passed another law, promulgating it by Proclamation as on the previous occasion. It amended the Regulation of September, 1919, and its provisions closely followed those of the Government of India Act of 1919. Provision was made for the election of a larger number of Members on a wider franchise than before. The maximum strength of the Council was raised from 25 to 50 of whom 15 alone were to be officials nominated by the Government; out of the 35 non-official Members 28²⁶ were to be returned by electoral constituencies²⁷ and 7 to be nominated by the Government. The Dewan would be the President but a Deputy President, not necessarily a Government official, would also be appointed to preside over the meetings in the absence of the President.

26. Of the 28 seats, 1 was allotted to Trivandrum, 22 were distributed among the 34 Taluks; 1 was given to the Planters' Association 1 to *Jenmis*, 2 to Commerce and Industry and 1 to *Itavakas* etc.
27. Franchise was extended to the registered holders, *inamdars* and tenants of land, the annual value of which was not less than Rs 5; those who were assessed in a Municipality to land or building tax of not less than Rs 3 and in Trivandrum Town, tax of not less than Re. 1 or profession tax of any amount; those who were assessed to income tax; graduates of recognised Universities who were not undergoing instruction; and discharged, retired or pensioned officers of the Nair Brigade or His Majesty's Army or Navy; provided they were not of unsound mind and were not under 21 years of age. Women were placed on a level of equality with men both in the matter of election and Membership of the Council. The total number of electors during 1922-23 was about 96,316 which formed 2.5 per cent of the total population.

The Legislative Council was vested with the powers of voting on the State budget, moving resolutions on matters of general interest and asking questions including supplementary questions²⁸. This was indeed a great advance because hitherto the non-official Members could only approve or disapprove of the application of funds, without being able to record a conjoint opinion on the direction of public expenditure. The proceedings of the Council evoked considerable public attention. Shri Mulam Thirunal Maharaja was the first Ruler to create representative institutions in an Indian State and it is remarkable that he did so before the people themselves actively began to demand them.

The Maharaja had however proclaimed:

"Nothingshall affect or be deemed to have affected our Prerogative right to make and pass Acts and Proclamations independent of the Legislative Council which right is declared to be and to have been always possessed and retained by us".

It is interesting to note that the new Regulation, though it conferred more powers on the Council, did not yet satisfy the popular leaders as it also was brought into effect by Royal Proclamation. The main cause of the agitation that the Council was not consulted when the Regulation for changing its own constitution and powers was being made, still persisted. While the contents of the reform were progressive, the popular clamour was against the method by which it was effected. The discontented leaders therefore notified their intention to take out a procession and stage a demonstration on the opening day of the reformed Legislative Council. The Government however decided to meet the agitation firmly and banned the proposed procession and demonstration. Thereafter the agitation gradually began to lose its momentum.

28. Reserved subjects could not however be discussed. The previous consent of the Dewan was necessary for the introduction of certain measures. Every Legislative measure passed by the Council required the assent of the Dewan. The independent power of emergency legislation by the Dewan and the royal assent were retained.

CHAPTER 7

POLITICAL CONFERENCES IN MALABAR.

In the early days of the national movement the Indian leaders were animated by the buoyant hope that their objective of self-government would be achieved through the good offices and liberal statesmanship of the British administrators. Accordingly the resolutions passed by the Indian National Congress in those days were mainly concerned with the removal of the several obnoxious measures adopted by the Government as well as with the constitutional reforms intended to pave the way for a truly representative government. For the first time in the history of India, the emergence of the Congress gave the educated Indians a common platform where they could exchange their opinions and mould their political aspirations. The Moderates believed that a clear and well-balanced presentation of popular grievances would strike the sympathetic chord of the British Parliament. They placed implicit faith in the sense of fairness of the English people. Loyal to the Government and appreciative of the liberal features of administration, as they were, the Moderates looked upon the British constitution as the strongest bulwark of popular liberty and democratic privileges. The early progress of the Congress had its solid basis on this firm faith in the British constitution and the British sense of justice.¹

Again in those days the Congress did not concern itself with the princely States in India. But the people in these States were very much watchful of and influenced by the political developments outside. This phase of the growth of the Congress and its activities was represented in British Malabar by the educated classes who took a lively interest in its work. But there were only a few of them. They used to attend the annual sessions of the Congress²

1. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Congress*, p. 61.

2. Messrs C. Sankaran Nair, G. P. Pillai, V. Ryrü Nambiar, C. Kunhirama Menon, Mannath Krishnan Nair, S. K. Nair, C. Karunakara Menon, K. P. Achutha Menon, K. U. Narayana Menon and Dr. T. M. Nair were some of them.

regularly. Among them, Mr. T. M. Nair^a was deeply interested in the working of the Indian National Congress and he made a mark for himself by his vehement speeches. Mr. V. Ryrū Nambiar acted as the general Secretary of the Congress for some time. Another great enthusiast was Mr. (afterwards Sir) C. Shankaran Nair¹ who presided over thirteenth session of the Congress held at Amraoti

3. Mr. T. M. Nair was born on 15th January 1868 as a member of the Tharavath family of Palghat. After his studies at the Presidency College, Madras and the Madras Medical College he resided in England during 1889-96 and got his M. S. and M. D. Degrees in the latter year. Here he was on the side of the Gladstonian Liberals and was much impressed by the Home Rule agitation in Ireland. He also helped Dadabhai Naoroji to secure his seat in the British Parliament. On return, he settled down in Madras in 1897. In 1906 he protested against the action of the authorities in Bengal that led to the break-up of the Barisal Political Conference. In 1911 when some members of the Municipal Council, Palghat, were dismissed by the Government he delivered a "fighting speech" as described by the *Advocate* of Bombay. His criticism of Sri Arthur Lawley's regime was "a conspicuous example of his fearless advocacy of the public cause". He was elected to the Madras Legislative Council in 1912 and was responsible for the Medical Registration Act of 1914. He rendered signal service to the Madras Corporation.

Through referred to as the Pherozeshah Mehta of South India, he had little faith in compromises. He was a "leader more after the European than after the Indian model". A powerful speaker who often hit back and hit hard, he wielded a vigorous pen and wrote in a racy style. He was no opportunist to play to the officials gallery. With his rare moral courage, strong will and sturdy independence he dominated the political scene in Madras and opposed Mrs. Annie Besant. He coined the name 'Montford Reformers'. An advocate of social equality, he took up the cause of the labourers as well as the Non-Brahmins in Madras and worked hard for the elevation of the depressed classes in society. Often he used to contribute articles to the *Madras Standard*. He expired on 17 July, 1919. (See his biographical sketch by Mr. N. Gopala Menon).

4. Born as a member of Chettur House in Mankarai in South Malabar, on 11 July 1857, Mr. Sankaran Nair was educated at Angadippuram, Cannanore and Calicut in his early days. After graduation with distinction at the Presidency College, Madras in 1878, he passed the Examination in Law. He became an apprentice under Mr. Horatio Shepherd and continued legal practice at Madras. He was interested in social reform. He presided over the first Provincial Conference in Madras in 1897. He used to attend many of the annual sessions of the Congress until he became a Judge of the High Court of Madras in 1904. He had to officiate thrice before he was confirmed as a permanent Judge in 1908.

in 1897. That year was characterised by a severe famine, the unpopular operations against plague in Poona city, the punishment of Tilak and the Government's attempt to amend the law against sedition. The educated classes of Malabar, though imbued with the spirit of the Congress and anxious to disseminate its message, were not yet able to exercise much influence on the popular mind as many of them had their own avocations outside Kerala that gave them little opportunity to come into direct contact with the masses.

In his Presidential address, Mr. Sankaran Nair referred to the gracious Proclamation of Queen Victoria which "continues to-day a standing rebuke to those of her European subjects who would deny us the right of equal citizenship." He added, "we are more concerned with the progress of our country in the future than with the benefits we have already derived under British rule". He recalled the benefits that British rule conferred upon India but felt that "the real link that binds us indissolubly to England is the hope.....that with England's help we shall, and under her guidance alone we can, attain national unity and national freedom". Imbued with British ideas of duty, rights and brotherhood, the Indian people naturally desired "to share the responsibilities of British citizenship." They were already admitted, he said, "into the outer precincts of the temple of freedom." He hoped that England would persist in the line of policy she had initiated and thereby deepen the feeling of loyalty in India. "It is impossible to argue a man into slavery in the English language". He opined that "real freedom is possible only under the Government of the English nations, nurtured in liberty, hating every form of tyranny, and willing to extend the blessings of representative government to those capable of using it wisely in the interests of freedom and progress." He called attention to the poverty of India, the root cause of famines, and suggested that the Government might concede the permanent settlement immediately to all parts of India and reduce expenditure, particularly military expenditure. He insisted that the British Government should recognise the equality of all before law rather than foster class prejudices. He demanded the admission of Indians into public service "on an equal footing with Europeans." "On this race question no concession is possible. No compromise can be accepted.....Inequality means race inferiority, national abasement....."Mr. Sankaran Nair then referred to the Operation Plague in Poona city which led to worthy of the man and suited to the times when the forces of reactotypes now reigning in the city." He requested the Englishmen to understand the working of the native mind. "Let us endeavour", he concluded, "under a solemn sense of responsibility, as well as loyalty to our country, to bring about that glorious future which must inevitably crown our efforts". (*A short life of Sir C. Sankaran Nair*, by Sir C. Madhavan Nair, PP. 144-162).

"His Presidential speech was a strong and masculine utterance, worthy of the man and suited to the times when the forces of reaction were so strongly in evidence.....his was a vigorous plea for free

A District Congress Committee seems, however, to have been organised^{1a} in Malabar for the first time in 1910. Mr. C. Kunhiraman Menon, Founder Proprietor and Editor of the *Kerala Patrika*, a Malayalam periodical published from Calicut, was the first Secretary of the District Congress Committee, in which capacity he continued to serve for some years. He propagated the message of nationalism through the columns of his paper. In those days the purpose of the meetings of the District Congress Committee which were held once or twice a year was mostly to elect a few delegates to attend the annual session of the Indian National Congress.

In 1913 a Provincial Conference of the District Congress was held at Calicut with Mr. C. Vijayaraghava-chariar of Salem as President. This conference was successful to some extent in creating a political stir among the people. With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 there were signs of a new life. The people on the whole did not want the British to be defeated by Germany. The feats of endurance and heroism exhibited by the Indian soldiers in France and Flanders during the winter of 1914 engendered a feeling of self-respect and national pride among the people. They naturally aspired for an increasing share in the administration of the country after the World War.

The Home Rule Movement that began in India in 1916 under the leadership of Dr. Annie Besant and Lokamanya Balgangadhar Tilak evoked positive response in Malabar. It is from that year onwards that we have a continuous record of nationalist activity in that area. Both the leaders carried on vigorous national propaganda in support of the Home Rule movement. A branch of the Home Rule League was started in Malabar with Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer¹ of the Calicut Bar, a devoted follower of Dr. Annie Besant and

institutions as the true cure for degradation and misery....." (Sir Surendranath Banerjee. *A Nation in the Making*. pp. 153-54).

Mr. G. P. Pillai has noted his "coolness and courage". A "radical of radicals," he impressed one as a sober politician.

4a. However in 1903 a Congress Conference had been held at Calicut.

5. Mr. Rama Iyer was born at Manjeri on 5 July, 1877. He was the son of Mr. Manjeri Sundaram Iyer, a lawyer and Mrs. Lekshmi Ammal. After school education in the home town, he passed F. A. Examination with distinction from Kerala Vidya Sala, Calicut. He stood first in the Madras Presidency with first class at the B. A. Degree examination in 1896. A product of the Madras Christian College, he won the Jagirdar of Arni Gold Medal for Physics.

After passing the B. L. Degree Examination later, he started legal practice in the District Court, Calicut, in 1899. Subsequently he became

a great patriot and organiser of exceptional ability, as its President. Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon, Barrister-at-Law who had just then returned from England, was elected as its Secretary. Mr. Rama Iyer and Mr. Kesava Menon gave a new orientation to nationalist activity in Malabar, equipped, as they were with plenty of talent and resourcefulness. The Malabar District Congress Committee too was reorganised. There were enthusiastic workers among its

a High Court Vakil. He was unrivalled in his days as a lawyer practising on the criminal side. He used to appear for the defence in almost all the sensational criminal cases in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. A sharp witted master of cross-examination, he was a terror to the police and an idol of the judges. He appeared on behalf of Mrs. Besant in the Coimbatore National Flag Case and got her acquitted. Similarly in a famous pollution case he defended Dr. K. V. Choyi of Calicut and got him also acquitted.

An ardent follower of Mrs. Besant, he was one of the early founders of the Theosophical Society in Malabar. He was the soul of the Kerala Theosophical Federation of which he was Secretary for a long time. He constructed the Annie Hall at Calicut and built up a library for carrying on the theosophical activities. With the co-operation of Mr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer he constructed a temple in Adyar in which anyone could worship irrespective of caste or creed. He made one of his successful Muslim clients donate money with which a small mosque also came to be built in the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar. He presided over several theosophical conferences in India. A distinguished man of high cultural attainment, he could talk without effort and with authority on many subjects like religion, literature, law, philosophy, education, history, physics, chemistry, mathematics and astronomy.

An ardent nationalist, he was the leader of the Home Rule Movement in Malabar as well as an active member of the Indian National Congress. His views on politics however changed according to Mrs. Besant's changes in political outlook. At the Calcutta session of the Congress presided over by Mrs. Besant he made a mark for himself by his brilliant oratory. He was the President of the Coorg Political Conference in 1928. The last time he appeared in public as a Congressman was as a delegate to the Political Conference at Payyannur presided over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

Though born of an orthodox Brahmin family, he proved himself to be a courageous and progressive social reformer. It was his boldness in 1917 that secured for the backward and the depressed classes the right of access to the Tali Temple roads. He broke custom by participating in public in inter-caste dinners, for which his whole family was subjected to severe social ostracism by the orthodox elements. He declared himself against marriage of girls in their infancy.

members. Mr. K. P. Raman Menon,^{5a} a leading lawyer of Calicut and Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon were respectively the President and Secretary of the District Congress Committee. Thus the District Home Rule League and the new Congress Committee worked jointly under Mr. Kesava Menon's leadership. Mr. P. A. Kunhamed, an energetic Muslim youth, worked for two years as Assistant Secretary of both the organisations and this fact helped, in a large measure, to enlist the sympathies of the Moplahs for the nationalist movement. A scheme of self-government was formulated after lengthy discussions among the leaders; the people also caught the new spirit.

Branch Committees of the Congress and the Home Rule League were organised in several villages in Malabar District, public meetings held and political consciousness aroused. The District Committee was actively assisted by several enthusiastic leaders.^{5b} At this juncture, an incident that happened at a public meeting at Calicut in 1916 gave a fillip to the nationalist movement and ignited the feelings of the people not only in Malabar but also in Travancore and Cochin. The District Collector, an Englishman, presided over the meeting, convened to aid the war effort. When Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon began to address the gathering in Malayalam the Collector obstinately refused to permit him to speak in that language though the former asserted his right to do so. In protest against the discourteous treatment, Mr. Menon along with a large number of persons present, staged a walk out. This bold defiance of the ruling authorities during a period of national emergency did not fail to attract

He was also a publicist and a journalist. He edited the *West Coast Spectator* and the *Sanathana Dharma* for some time.

He was District Scout Commissioner of Malabar for a long time. He attracted the youth to himself by his charity, spirit of adventure and selfless service and he inspired them to fight against 'lawless laws' socially and politically.

In his old age he became a *Sanyasin*, having assumed the name Anagarika Rama. He expired at Calicut on 24 April, 1958. In his demise, Kerala lost a dominating personality and a peerless leader who was a strong connecting link between the nineteenth century and the twentieth.

5a Born on 1 February, 1867, he was a member of the Palat *tharavad* in Cherpulacherry. Graduating from the Presidency College, Madras, he took his B. L. degree and enrolled himself as a Vakil of the High Court of Madras in 1891. He was first elected as a Member of the Madras Legislative Council in 1913. He expired on 20 February, 1942 at Madras.

5b. Messrs. K. Madhavan Nair, P. Achuthan. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, P. Moideen Koya, P. Ramunni Menon, T. V. Sundara Iyer and U. Gopala Menon were foremost among them.

public attention or to make the people more determined in spirit than hitherto.

The accepted policy of the Indian National Congress at this time was to hold annual meetings in Taluks, Districts and Provinces. People with varying shades of political opinion used to meet together and pass resolutions unanimously. Those who took active interest in the holding of such conferences were mostly members of affluent and aristocratic families.

The Malabar District Conference held at Palghat on 4 and 5 March, 1916, under the presidentship of Dr. Annie Besant is an important landmark in the history of freedom struggle in Kerala. It was attended by a large number of people from all parts of Malabar and Cochin. Mr. V. Vasudeva Raja of Kollengode, Chairman of the Reception Committee, referred to the discriminatory injustice of the Arms Act which ordained that only the European race was entitled to carry arms in India. It was anomalous that a subordinate European official could carry arms while the superior Indian officer could not do so, even for self-defence. Dr. Annie Besant opined that the District Conference should concentrate attention on specific problems of regional interest and suggest improvements in the general system of administration. The conference adopted a number of resolutions.⁶

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6. The first resolution exhorted the people to organise Congress Committees in the District for the attainment of self-government. The second demanded the institution of Village Panchayats, with minor civil and criminal jurisdiction and administrative powers over sanitation, roads, bridges, ferries, schools, libraries and forests. The third resolution demanded an increase in the number of elected members in the Municipalities and Taluk and District Boards as well as the election of non-official Presidents for the Boards. The fourth resolution was against the revenue settlement in Malabar effected by the Government without the sanction of the Madras Legislative Assembly. The fifth resolution invited the attention of the Government of Madras to the urgent necessity of initiating minor irrigation works in the District. By the next resolution the conference protested against the encroachment by the Government on private lands on the banks of rivers and canals. The seventh emphasised that a great measure of self-government should be granted to the District Boards and the Municipalities. Three other resolutions referred to the construction of a railway line between Palghat and Dindigul, the compulsory introduction of elementary education in all towns and the immediate stoppage of the practice of indentured Labour. There were a few more resolutions. All the above resolutions indicate that the conference was not concerned with the policy of the Congress in general but only problems of local interest. Mr. A. K. Pillai, *Kerala—Past and Present*.

The Home Rule Movement soon became intensely popular. The success of the Palghat Conference was a source of great encouragement to the leaders and the people alike. The second District Conference was held at Calicut on 23 and 24 April, 1917 and was presided over by Mr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer.⁷ The presence of Dr. Annie Besant greatly enlivened the conference. The Chairman of the Reception Committee, Mr. K. P. Raman Menon, touched on a number of problems like post-war Reforms, self-government for India, the Arms Act, elementary education, tenancy question and other topics. In his Presidential address Mr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer referred to Kerala's glorious past, the need for industrial development and vigorous war effort on behalf of Britain. This conference also adopted a few resolutions.⁸

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7. Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon, T. V. Sundara Iyer and P. Achuthan were the Joint Secretaries of the Reception Committee. The Committee desired to hold the conference on the lawns of Mananchira near the Huzur office in the heart of the town. But as the Collector refused permission it was held on the Tennis Court in the spacious compound of Mr. K. P. Raman Menon's residence. The authorities were at this time suspicious of the activities of the Congress. The conference was attended by the several delegates from the different parts of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. The President and Dr. Besant were accorded hearty welcome and taken in procession along the main streets of the town. The Zamorin formally received the guests at the conference. The Zamorin's proposal of Mr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer to the chair was seconded by Mr. K. Kunhikuttan Tampam and supported by Mr. Rarichan Moopan who were important landlords.
 8. An important resolution called upon the people to contribute liberally to the war fund. Mr. M. P. Narayana Menon, a young lawyer, opposed it on the ground that the people were too poor and that it would strengthen British imperialism. Mr. Menon's contention was that India herself was getting loans from Britain and so she might give money as a loan rather than as a gift. The President remarked that England was fighting for the freedom of the smaller nations and that it was India's duty to help the war effort. Mr. Menon's opposition created a flutter at the conference and as there was none to second the resolution the President requested its withdrawal.

Mr. T. C. K. Kurup expressed gratification that Indians were being recruited as volunteers in the Indian Defence Force and demanded the establishment of Military Schools and Colleges and the promotion of Indians to the higher ranks of the military service. Mr. Rarichan Moopan made a request that the holders of small estates and tenants also should be given proper representation in the Madras Legislative Council.

The conference thanked the Government for having stopped the indenture system of Labour and also resolved to educate, in consultation with the All India Congress Committee, the public about the scheme of self-government prepared by the Congress and the League. It was requested that the Arms

Meanwhile the Government adopted measures to repress the activities of Dr. Annie Besant and Lokamanya Tilak in Madras and Bombay. The arrest of Dr. Besant about the middle of 1917 greatly excited the national consciousness of the people in Malabar. The cry of Home Rule reverberated in every part of the District. There was countrywide demand for the release of Mr. B. P. Wadia, Mr. G. S. Arundale and Dr. Besant, particularly after the election of the last as President of the thirty-second session of the Indian National Congress to be held at Calcutta in December, 1917. In July, a huge demonstration was arranged at Calicut which ended in a public meeting. The District Magistrate served special orders on Mr. K. P. Raman Menon and Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer against a similar demonstration, arranged to be held on 16 August.

A branch of the Home Rule League was established at Kollengode. The first annual conference of the League was held at Calicut in September, 1917 under the presidentship of Mr. Rama Iyer. In the same month Dr. Besant was released. As Gandhiji had suggested, it was proposed at the conference in Calicut to obtain as many signatures as possible from Malabar to a memorial to be presented to the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Montagu, on his proposed visit to India. Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon was entrusted with the work. Later in November it was resolved, at a public meeting held under the auspices of the Home Rule League, to establish a branch of the Muslim League at Calicut and request the Government to release Maulana Muhammad Ali and Mr. Shaukat Ali.

Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer and Mr. George Joseph^a a practising lawyer who engaged himself in politics and journalism as side-shows

Act should be liberally interpreted by the Government. According to one resolution, the areas in Kasargod Taluk inhabited by Malayalees were to be added to the Malabar District. Loyalty to the throne was affirmed when Mr. M. P. Narayana Menon added that he should not be misunderstood as disloyal.

9. By the time there were 182 members in the Home Rule League. The publication of a weekly in Malayalam was considered. (A. K. Pillai: *Kerala—Past and Present*).

9a. Born in 1887, Mr. George Joseph, to whom Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru makes a feeling reference in his *Autobiography*, represented indeed a high type of culture. There was a fiery glow in his nature that endeared him to his friends. Emotional, perhaps even whimsical, his mental restlessness gave his career its rich variety. After his studies at the Madras Christian College, he passed out of the Middle Temple, England, in 1909. He started legal practice at Madurai, his town of adoption, and was soon attracted to the Home Rule Movement and given training in political organization

and who was the Editor of the *South Indian Mail*, were chosen as two of the three members of the Home Rule deputation sent to England in 1918 to present the Indian case before British public. However the deputationists were, on the way, stopped at Gibraltar by the British Admiral under instructions from the British Government and sent back to India. This sensational incident only whetted the political enthusiasm of the people of Malabar.

Early in May, 1918 was held the third Malabar District Political Conference at Tellicherry. It was presided over by Mr. Mir Azad Ali Khan Bahadur, the Zamindar of Banganappalle. Mr. Rama Varma the *Valia* (Senior) Raja of Chirakkal, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The most important of the resolutions¹⁰

by Mrs. Besant. He was one of the first batch of barristers who sacrificed their comforts to engage themselves in nationalist work. At the bidding of Pandit Motilal Nehru he "discarded his fashionable Sackville Row suits for the coarser homespun" and associated himself as Editor with the Allahabad daily, the *Independent*, that used to exercise a profound influence on its readers. Mr. George Joseph gave it a distinctive individuality. He was subsequently sentenced to rigorous imprisonment in course of the movement of 1921. Later he became the Editor of the *Young India*, Gandhiji's weekly. In 1924 after resigning his membership of the Indian National Congress he went back to the Bar, shifting his practice later to Madras. Again he became an active Congress worker. In 1937 he was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly.

The landslide in the opinion of the Indian Christian Community in favour of nationalism was very much ascribable to his dynamic leadership. A man of strong convictions, he never lost his noble bearing or courage. He had also participated in the struggle for equality of political rights in Travancore. He expired on 6 March, 1938. (*Hindusthan Times*, 7 March, 1938).

Mr. George Joseph possessed the "best fighting spirit suited to Hyde Park tastes". Neither a "tub-thumper" nor a "mendicant", he had a dourness and rebelliousness "with a dare-devil tendency". His readiness to go the whole hog was no mere pretension. It was an "essential part of his nature". He did "not pop his tail between the hind legs", but if he sowed the wind he was equally ready to reap the whirl-wind. He had the rare gift of emotional appeal and could electrify from the press or the platform without resorting to "the clap-traps of the political orator". O. M. Thomas, *'Under the Knife'*, pp. 138-50.

10. Other resolutions referred to the Indianisation of the army, the introduction of free primary education for children, the repeal of the repressive Acts and the enlargement of the sphere of Local Administration.

passed at the conference was that on self-government which demanded the establishment, within a stipulated period, of a government responsible to the people; as a first step, administrative reform was to be enacted by the British Parliament as consistent with the Congress-League memorandum.

The Government of India subsequently made their comments on the Montagu—Chelmsford Report in their 'First Despatch on Indian Constitutional Reforms' dated 5 March, 1919, to which Sir C. Sankaran Nair who had accepted office as Member for Education in the Viceroy's Executive Council in October, 1915, added a Minute of Dissent. The framing of the Minute had been preceded by heated discussions in the Viceroy's Council when Mr. Montagu also was present. Sir Sankaran Nair attacked the view that the demand for the Reform emanated "only from a small and insignificant class".¹¹ He traced the history of the Indian National Congress from 1885 to show that the organisation represented the masses in spite of the Government's persistent efforts to keep the Mahrattas and the Muslims away from it. It was pointed out that measures in the field of self-government introduced by the Government under the pressure of the Congress had been successful. He referred to the need for great constitutional reforms in the interests of the masses in India. It was not true, he added "that the reforms advocated will result in the transference of powers to persons who are not interested in the welfare of the masses; and it is also quite feasible to transfer power to the masses themselves".¹² He criticised the provisions in the Despatch intended "to place the Minister in the Legislative Council in relation to 'Transferred Departments' in subordination to the Executive Council". His opinion was that a Minister should be able to appoint, with the sanction of the Secretary of State, or request the Secretary of State to appoint, any person outside the service for any post under him. He felt that the accessibility of the Governor to the permanent Heads of Departments and the Secretaries under a Minister would only weaken the position of the latter. In his eyes the attempt to eliminate the control of the Legislative Council over even the Transferred Subjects was very much objectionable; as also the power given, in the Despatch, to the Government of India to interfere in the case of Transferred Subjects. He resisted the view of the Government of India that on more official, ordinarily an English Civilian, should be appointed to the Executive Council on the ground that one Indian Member would have no chance against two English official Members. He was firm in his view that the Indian element and the popular element should be powerful in the Government of

11. First Minute of Dissent, Paragraphs 8 and 9.

12. First Minute of Dissent, Paragraph 12.

a Province. He suggested that in regard to the choice of a Provincial Governor the primary consideration that should weigh with the Secretary of State should be the fitness of a person "to carry out the duties, not as hitherto, of an autocratic Head of a Province but of a constitutional Ruler".¹³ His legitimate doubt was whether "life spent in the Indian Civil Service is calculated, except in rare cases, to stimulate that part of political talent which consists in the study of the large legislative proposals which are from time to time needed in actively thinking political communities".¹⁴ It should be possible for the Secretary of State to nominate one with outstanding abilities in a particular line in India or in England as Member in the Governor's Executive Council. Mr. Sankaran Nair was also against the proposal of the Government of India to constitute grand committees out of the Members of the Legislative Council in order to legislate on Reserved Subjects as they would prove to be an "undesirable institution" in so far as they would be a check on a popular Assembly. In short he was against taking away the kernel of the reform proposals by destroying the influence of the Ministers and the Legislative Council. He demanded responsibility at the centre. As there was a proposal to allow the Government of India to interfere with the Transferred Subjects in the Provinces to secure uniformity in legislation throughout the country, it was "but reasonable that in the Government of India also the decision of such questions should be left to the Legislature and an Indian Minister.....Responsible government in the Provinces demands responsible government in the Government of India in the same subjects, as otherwise Provincial responsibility will be diluted".¹⁵ When there were various questions, especially financial, to be settled between the Government of India and the Secretary of State, it was imperative that there should be "a strong Indian element in the Executive Council" for, "without adequate Indian influence the Government of India will yield to the Secretary of State".

This famous Minute touching on a number of vital matters affecting the Government of India and the Provincial Governments was ignored without discussion. Obviously the Government of India was afraid that the power to 'influence' the policy of Reserved Subjects would eventually be transformed into the power to 'control' through the budget.

Meanwhile the Division of Functions Committee gave their Report in regard to the subjects to be kept in the Reserved Half and

13. First Minute of Dissent, Paragraph 30.

14. *Ibid.*

15. First Minute of Dissent, Paragraph 33.

those in the Transferred Half. In their Despatch dated 16 April 1919 the Government of India dealt with this Report and on this occasion also Sir C. Sankaran Nair recorded his (second) Minute of Dissent. Evidently the Government of India was trying to render the new Reform Proposals ineffective; the views of the Functions Committee tallied in general with those of Sir Sankaran Nair except in a few matters. It was improper, in his eyes, that the Provincial Governor should be in a position to recommend the re-transferring to the Reserved List of a subject, already transferred as such a power "cuts at the root of the whole scheme". Such a provision would be "a warning to the Legislative Council not to indulge in a course of action which will lead the Civil Service to take that step".¹⁶ Of course the British Parliament might take away that it had given; but the bringing of the Civil Service into the picture would only ensure the "failure of Reform" in so far as the "Secretary of State has allowed himself to be merely a passive instrument in the hands of the Civil Service".¹⁷ Sir Sankaran Nair strongly expressed the view that industrial development ought to be a Transferred Subject in the charge of an Indian Minister, as well as Education.

Only a man with rare courage and strong convictions could have written the two Minutes in such strain in those days. As Sir C. Madhavan Nair puts it, "There is no malice in his criticisms. He does not attack any individual or individuals; his attack is directed against the 'system' of British Government, represented by British Officials. It requires rare courage to attack them in the 'holy of holies'—where rare courage to attack them in the 'holy of holies'—where almost all were against him."¹⁸ The Viceroy and Mr. Montagu found it difficult to deal with him; but he was only giving expression to India's needs and aspirations and resisting the attempt to lessen the control of the Legislature over the Reserved Subjects through a unified budget. However the Parliamentary Committee in England was more or less in agreement with his views expressed in his Dissenting Minute. The Act of 1919 was finally passed, (which, as we know, came into force later in 1921).

At this juncture on an invitation extended by Mr. Rama Varma Raja and Mr. Sankara Varma Raja of Katatanad the fourth Political Conference was held at Badagara in the first week of May, 1919. Mr. K. P. Raman Menon who presided over it dealt with the important political developments with special reference to the needs of Malabar. It was resolved that the new reform proposals were disappointing and that nothing less

16. Second Minute of Dissent, Paragraph 4.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Sir C. Madhavan Nair: *Sir C. Sankaran Nair*, Pages 108-09.

than self-government within the empire would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people. The notorious Rowlatt Act as well as the Moplah Outrages Act must be repealed with immediate effect. A resolution passed by the conference exhorted the people of Malabar to render all support to the Satyagraha started by Gandhiji for the repeal of the Rowlatt Act. The conference expressed its sense of satisfaction about the British victory in war and the conferment of a peerage on Mr. S. P. Sinha. It would appear that on the whole the fourth conference was not so popular as the earlier ones.

In April, 1920 the fifth Political Conference met at Manjeri under the Presidentship of Mr. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, Editor of the *Hindu*. Mr. Manavedan Tirumulpad, Junior Raja of Nilambur, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. This was the last in the series of early District Political Conferences held in Malabar. The fifth conference is significant as marking the decline of the great influence that had been exerted by Dr. Annie Besant on the political developments in Malabar.

The Manjeri Conference¹⁹ was convened at a time when the placidity of the political waters had been broken by rude ripples. The Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, the atrocities perpetrated by the Government in the Punjab, the failure of the Khilafat deputation that went to England, the Montagu—Chelmsford proposals which fell short of India's expectations—all these tended to aggravate the political dissatisfaction in the country. As the political aspirations of the people pointed to the ideal of self-government within the empire, Dr. Annie Besant's contention that the constitutional proposals should be accepted as a first step towards further progress and given a fair trial naturally created a schism in nationalist circles. The factors favourable for the starting of the non-cooperation movement were now present in the political atmosphere. The Muslims had already decided that they could not offer any co-operation to the Government.

The Manjeri Conference was attended by nearly 1300 delegates from several parts of Kerala and Madras. Even before the conference formally began, Dr. Annie Besant started vigorous propaganda to bring round the people to her view-point. The conference represented a trial of strength between two wings. Dr. Annie Besant and Mr. Rama Iyer were ranged on one side and Messrs K. P. Kesava Menon,

19. At this conference the common people rubbed shoulders with the great land lords. Cheriya Ettan Raja of Calicut, Elaya Raja of Nilambur, Moopil Nair of Mannarghat, Udaya Varma Raja of Mankada, K. G. Sree Veerarayan Raja and others were present.

k. Madhavan Nair and Mr. A. Rangaswamy Iyengar on the other. The President was of the view that though the new constitutional Reforms were unsatisfactory the people should take advantage of them by entering the Legislature. At the Subjects Committee meeting held on 28 April there were heated arguments between the Home Rule Leaguers who were Moderates and the Nationalists who were Extremists.²⁰

A resolution was passed at the conference congratulating Sir C. Sankaran Nair for having resigned his membership²¹ of the Viceroy's Executive Council as a protest against the Government's policy.

20. Messrs A. Rangaswamy Iyengar, N. S. Ramaswamy Iyengar and M. K. Acharya took a lively part in the debate.

21. In 1919 the Punjab rebellion broke out leading to the arrest of the leaders, the notorious shooting tragedy at Jallianwallah Bagh, the crawling order etc., Martial Law was proclaimed in the Punjab on 15 April. On 23 July Sir Sankaran Nair resigned his Membership on the ground that the prolongation of Martial Law was quite unnecessary as the disturbances had practically ceased much earlier. He had been much annoyed that the accused charged under Martial Law in the Punjab were denied legal assistance. His "courageous attitude" on the Punjab question was very much appreciated by the Indian National Congress.

Subsequently Sir Sankaran Nair became a Member of the Council of the Secretary of State for India, in spite of his differences with Mr. Montagu. He resigned office in November, 1921. In 1922 occurred his break with the Indian National Congress. Already in 1906 he had expressed himself against the pressure tactics of the Congress in the form of boycott, a believer as he was in the Liberal Government in England who, he thought, would confer self-government on India. In the Viceroy's Executive Council also he had been fighting single-handed against the reactionary views of the Government of India. The Non Co-operation Movement inaugurated by Gandhiji militated against his own process of thought and way of action. Hence his book *Gandhi and Anarchy*, published in 1922. Subsequently he became a Member of the Council of State in which he moved a motion later on 19 February 1930 thanking the Viceroy for his announcement promising Dominion Status for India within the British empire. Until he retired from public life he had been fighting according to his own light, for India's eventual freedom.

"As an advocate of the reform of the Hindu society in general, and of the status of women in particular he rose to be a power in the land Sir Sankaran Nair, in view of his influential position in the Government of India, and of his tenacity and courage, was regarded as the hope of a nation struggling for freedom. And he did not disappoint..... He strove hard to advance the destiny of India..... A chief trait in Sir Sankaran

Other resolutions recommended the regulation of working hours in factories, the prohibition of Child Labour, the repeal of the Planter's Labour Law and the protection of freedom of the Press and the civil liberties of the people.

The Khilafat question gave rise to sharp differences of opinion. A resolution initiated by Mr. P. Komu Menon, Retired Assistant Excise Commissioner and seconded by Mr. T. V. Sundara Iyer of the Calicut Bar, requested the British Government to accede to the legitimate demands of the Indian Muslims and called upon both Hindus and Muslims to withdraw all co-operation if the Government were to remain obdurate. Dr. Annie Besant moved an amendment for the deletion of the latter part of the resolution as non-co-operation would be undesirable. Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer delivered a forceful speech supporting her, followed by Mr. Shanmuga Mudaliar. Messrs. Abdul Khader, Moideen Koya, Laskhmi Das and K. Madhavan Nair expressed themselves strongly against the amendment. The President remarked that as Dr. Besant herself had admitted the injustice done by the British to the Muslims, it was inevitable and honourable that the Hindus should join the latter and work against the Government. Dr. Besant's amendment was rejected by a large majority.

Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon moved the resolution that the new reforms were "unsatisfactory" and "disappointing" and it was seconded by Mr. L. A. Subbarama Iyer. Dr. Besant opined that the reforms had broadened the path towards self-government and therefore the terms "unsatisfactory" and "disappointing" should be deleted from the resolution. She added that Mr. Montagu who had fought against odds in getting the Bill passed deserved India's gratitude. Though supported by the Elaya Raja of Nilambur, Dr. Besant was stoutly opposed by Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon, N. S. Ramaswamy Iyengar and Rangaswamy Iyengar. Dr. Besant and her followers thereupon staged a walk-out and the original resolution was passed by an overwhelming and excited majority.

Mr. P. A. Krishna Menon in a resolution demanded legislation to safeguard the interests of the tenants of Malabar. The resolution

Nair's character was his independence To lodge his indomitable spirit, the great Viswakarma had given him a formidable body. He is six feet one in his shoes; his white *pugree* gives him the added advantage of another foot. And he has bulk to match his height. With his tall, erect body and his broad Atlantean shoulders he is fit to bear the weight of the British Empire his manly courage never stooped to meanness to conquer the spoils of office' O. M. Thomas, *Under the Knife*, pp. 38-48.

was passed by a majority in spite of the protests of the prominent landlords present at the conference²².

The Manjeri Political Conference revealed the rising tide of nationalism in Kerala. It was the ground on which Dr. Besant fought and lost her battle. She had loomed large in the political firmament for a few years but her influence evidently waned. The days of patient waiting and loyal co-operation were over. Soon Malabar was going to be plunged into the vortex of an active movement inspired and led by Gandhiji.

22. This resolution was opposed by Messrs K. C. Sree Veera Rayan Raja, Moopil Nair of Mannarghat, Udaya Varma Raja, Sankaran Nambudiri and K. T. Chandu Nambiar. They pointed out the impropriety of passing such a controversial resolution at the conference at which the landlords were not properly represented. They argued that land was the private property of the landlords and so no measure would be legal that sought to regulate their rights. Twenty-one landlords of Malabar present at the conference handed over to the President their written protest against the consideration of the resolution. (A. K. Pillai, *Kerala Past and Present*).

CHAPTER 8

DAWN OF GANDHIAN ERA

The year 1920 marks an important phase in the history of the national movement in India. In that year there occurred a sharp cleavage in the Indian National Congress. Dr. Annie Besant and her followers gradually withdrew from politics. Of course she was wielding a great amount of influence on the mind of many a political leader at the time but, as Mr. A. K. Pillai remarks, the political Conference at Manjeri clearly indicated that Malabar cared more for a national organisation and the policy it enunciated than for an individual and his or her personal opinions. The Gandhian era dawned.

It was at the Khilafat Conference held in June, 1920 that non-violent non-co-operation was accepted as a cardinal principle by the nationalist leaders. Gandhiji enunciated a definite policy regarding the new reforms, to be characterised by the promotion of *swadesi* and Hindu-Muslim unity. The political saint with spinning wheel preached the new technique of non-violence which was to revolutionise the entire movement. All this was precipitated by the decision of the Government of India on the Hunter Report condoning the ruthless action of the officials in the Punjab who had been responsible for the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre.

The Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress held in December, 1920 was attended by an unusual number of delegates from Malabar. The goal of the Congress was declared to be the attainment of *swaraj* by peaceful and legitimate means. The Nagpur session effected great organisational changes in the Congress, adopted the principle of creation of Provinces in India on a linguistic basis and accepted Hindi as the national language of the country. The Princely States also were brought within the orbit of the activities of the Congress. These changes in the constitution and the goal of the Congress necessitated analogous organisational changes on the Malabar coast as well. Kerala, including Travancore, Cochin and British Malabar, got a recognised position in Indian political affairs. The old Malabar District Congress Committee was now expanded into the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. Hitherto there had been no effective Congress work in Travancore and Cochin though several patriots in these two States had placed implicit faith in the creed of nationalism and joined the Malabar District Congress as members.

It was at this juncture in August, 1920 that Gandhiji set foot on the soil of Malabar for the first time. He did not then command the out-standing eminence of Dr. Besant on the political firmament

but his dynamic programme of non-violent non-co-operation already caught the imagination of the intelligentsia. Gandhiji was accompanied by the great Khilafat leader, Mr. Shaukat Ali. They wanted to give a new orientation to the national and Khilafat movements in Kerala. The Khilafat movement was making rapid progress at the time in the country especially from March, 1920 when it received added impetus on account of the anti-Turkish agitation started in England and the advance of the Allied Forces for the occupation of Constantinople.¹ The resentment of the Muslims in general was aroused, which had its natural repercussion in Malabar as well.²

Gandhiji and party arrived at Calicut³ on 18 August and, at a private conference held at his place of residence, he called upon the lawyers to suspend their practice at the Bar and withdraw their children from the Government-aided schools.⁴ Next day he proceeded to Mangalore.⁵ During this visit, Gandhiji was able to convert several people to his ideology.

1. "On 16 March, 1920 the people of Istanbul awoke to find all Government buildings including the post and telegraph offices policed by the heavy detachments of Entente troops, mostly British". (Webster, *The Turkey of Ataturk* p. 83).
2. There were several Khilafat meetings in Malabar. At the meeting held on 29 June, 1920 at Kuttuparamba Mr. B. Pocker who presided said that Khilafat was a religious issue and the aim of the meeting was only to place the Muslim view-point before the Peace Conference. The meeting protested against the peace terms offered by the Allies and requested their modification as consistent with Islamic tenets and also resolved to support the views of the Central Khilafat Committee as regards non-co-operation. A Khilafat Committee was formed consisting of Hindus and Muslims. (*Madras Times* dated 2 July, 1920. See File No. 306 dated 10 August, 1920, Madras Record Office, Madras).
3. Confidential Report, File No. 307, Madras Record Office. The report given to the Government was to the effect that there was little sympathy with the non-co-operation movement except on the part of a few "fanatical Mapilla youths" headed by Mr. P. Moideen Kutty and "briefless vakils" led by Messrs. K. Madhavan Nair, U. Gopala Menon and P. Achuthan.
4. At the meeting in the evening, Mr. Shaukat Ali was presented with a purse containing Rs. 2,500. The Saits (Bombay merchants) were responsible for the reception.
5. There was great enthusiasm and garlands and flowers were flung about. Gandhiji spoke at Tellicherry and Mr. Shaukat Ali at Cannanore. According to the confidential report, the crowds "were good-humoured. The people were curious to see what the leaders were like and treated them as a huge joke, at least this was the conclusion drawn from their faces, demeanour and conversation". At Cannanore the leaders got Rs. 500.

The Government of India considered it prudent to adopt a policy of non-interference.⁶ They thought that the resort to repressive measures under Special Emergency Laws or the immediate institution of proceedings against the nationalist leaders under ordinary criminal law would be inexpedient as such action would only make martyrs of them and gain for them a large number of adherents; the movement should not get the stimulus of prosecution. But at the same time they were of the view that those who incited the public to violence or tried to seduce the troops or the police should be prosecuted.

With the formation of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, Mr. K. Madhavan Nair came to be elected as its first Secretary. He was then enjoying vigorous practice at the Bar which he, along with his political co-workers, actively thought of giving up.

On 15 February, 1921 the arrival, at Calicut, of Mr. Yakub Hassan, a prominent Congress leader and Khilafat worker from Madras, made a great stir, particularly among the Moplahs. The District authorities looked with suspicion upon his activities in Malabar, afraid as they were, of any sense of fraternity growing between the Hindus and the Muslims. They were anxious to prevent the doctrine of non-co-operation from spreading among the Moplahs. Mr. Yakub Hassan had not intended to violate the law in Malabar but the authorities served him with a notice under section 144, C. P. C. Similar notices were served on Messrs. K. Madhavan Nair, U. Gopala Menon and Moideen Koya. This was the first occasion when a prohibitory order was ever served on any political leader in Malabar. The Indian National Congress had not at that time initiated or authorised civil disobedience in any part of the country and it would appear that the leaders in Malabar too had not therefore intended to launch any struggle against the Government.

Mr. Yakub Hassan decided however to disobey the illegal law on his own responsibility to protect individual liberty. Mr. K. Madhavan Nair's action, in informing the Associated Press of India of the unfortunate situation in Calicut created by the unexpected action of the Government was misinterpreted by the District Magistrate who, on 16 February issued warrants for the arrest of the leaders including Mr. Yakub Hassan. The District Magistrate sentenced them to simple imprisonment for six months.⁷ They were

6. D. O. No. 4147 (Political). Simla, dated 4 September, 1920.

7. Perfect peace prevailed in the town. The lawyers abstained from courts and children from schools. The shops were not open. No *rickshaw* was plying on the road. Even the District Magistrate expected no untoward incident to happen and was playing hockey before the trial began. The

not prepared to give any written undertaking not to violate the law in future. The news of their arrest spread like wild fire and the Government, anticipating trouble, prohibited public meetings within the Calicut Municipality and adjoining area.⁸

These developments at Calicut brought Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, General Secretary of the Congress, and Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon, then practising at the High Court of Madras, to the town. The District Magistrate, Mr. Thomas, and the District Superintendent of Police went to them with a strong posse of Armed Reserve Police but withdrew on being told that they did not intend to address public meetings. Mr. C. V. Narayana Menon, Chairman of the Calicut Municipal Council, offered his resignation as a mark of protest against the Government's policy.

On Mr. Rajagopalachari's advice, Mr. Kesava Menon decided to stop practising at the Madras Bar and assumed the office of the Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee in the place of Mr. K. Madhavan Nair undergoing imprisonment. Mr. Menon plunged himself in organisational activities in Malabar and propagated the ideals of the Indian National Congress for which he gave a strong foundation.⁹ Many young men, students and lawyers, devoted their whole time to political work in different parts of Kerala.¹⁰

leaders were taken to the Cannanore jail where they remained for the full term of the sentence though Mr. Yakub Hassan was released earlier on account of indisposition.

8. The existing law did not permit the authorities to apply the prohibitory order to the whole of the District.
9. The residence of Mr. Madhavan Nair at Chalapuram, Calicut, was used as his office.
10. Mr. Kesava Menon appears to have been the first to give up legal practice according to the mandate of the Congress. Messrs. K. Madhavan Nair, U. Gopala Menon, K. V. Gopala Menon, P. Achuthan and A. Karunakara Menon were devoting more time for political than professional work but the first two gentlemen were looked upon by the authorities as ex-vakils even by February, 1921. Mr. K. P. Appu Nair and Mr. K. V. Balakrishna Menon gave up their higher studies to take up political work and the latter died subsequently in the Central Jail, Cannanore, a martyr to the cause of his country. Messrs. V. U. Govindan, S. K. Kombrobail, K. Kesavan Nair, M. P. Narayana Menon, K. Kelappan Nair, M. Gopala Menon, M. Sankaran Nambiar, M. Narayana Menon, P. Ramunni Menon, K. G. Shankar, K. Nilakantan Nambudiripad, Thoppil Padmanabha Pillai, A. K. Pillai, S. Balakrishna Pillai, K. G. Gopalakrishnan, Chittedath Sanku Pillai,

The country was actively drawn into the vortex of national politics.¹¹

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee consisted at this time of 100 members, the Working Committee having their headquarters at Calicut. Kerala was divided into five Congress Districts with their headquarters centred at Tellicherry, Calicut, Palghat, Cochin and Trivandrum. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee did not have any permanent President but one of the assembled members used to preside over its meetings. A permanent Office Secretary assisted the Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee who was always on tour while a Treasurer, to be annually elected, managed the finances of the Congress organisation.

Separate Khilafat Committees also were organised throughout Kerala.¹² Mr. Muhammad Abdur Rahman undertook the responsibility for Khilafat propaganda. Both the Congress and Khilafat organisations were wedded to non-violence in spite of the repressive policy adopted by the Government and it was under heavy disabilities that the enthusiastic workers spread the new message among the masses.

Kuruvilla Mathew, K. Kumar, C. H. Govindan Nambiar, R. V. Sarma, Muhammad Abdul Rahman, T. V. Chathukutty Nair, K. Madhava Menon, T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, M. S. Devesan, W. P. Ignatius, M. Mathunni, Chidambaranath and Sekhara Menon were some of the other earlier patriots who marked the impress of their individuality on the national movement. Others who sympathised with the ideals of the Congress and helped the national cause were Messrs. L. A. Subbarama Iyer, P. Karunakara Menon, Pandavath Sankara Pillai, V. Achutha Menon, Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai, Y. Ramaswamy Iyer, Dr. M. E. Naidu, M. Sivathanu Pillai, H. B. Muhammad Rowther, Dr. A. R. Menon, K. K. Kuruvilla, Ikkanda Warriar and Lakshmidas Mathura Das.

11. Non-violence was definitely accepted as the creed of the Congress. When Mr. K. Madhava Menon, along with Mr. K. V. Balakrishna Menon picketed a liquor shop at Calicut, its enraged owner poured potsful of toddy on the volunteers who however remained calm. The next day they were subjected to more humiliation but again they stood the test. On another occasion, seeing Mr. K. Madhava Menon, clad in coarse khadi, at the Calicut railway station, when the town was under Martial Law, a European Sergeant slapped him on his face and tore off his cloth. Such incidents only sharpened the popular enthusiasm which expressed itself in a disciplined and non-violent manner.

12. The President and Secretaries of the Calicut unit were Messrs. Kunhikoya Thangal, Hassan Koya Mulla and Melekandi Moideen Koya respectively.

The first conference of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was held at Ottapalam towards the end of April, 1921 under the presidentship of Mr. T. Prakasam.¹³ It enabled the delegates from different parts of Kerala to meet together for the first time.

A Tenants' Conference, and a Khilafat Conference also were held at the same spot, besides a Students' Conference, held on 26 April under the presidentship of Mr. George Joseph, Editor of the *Independent*.

The Government obviously was stunned by the great popular enthusiasm evinced at the conference and the growing sense of fraternity between the Hindus and the Muslims. Without any provocation they let loose an orgy of terrorism, apparently to incite the masses to violent action and thereby get a chance to nip the nationalist movement in Malabar in the bud. Mr. P. Ramunni Menon, Secretary of the Reception Committee, Mr. Hameed Khan, Secretary of Khilafat Conference and Mr. Chengalath Madhava Menon, volunteer, were roughly handled and dragged along the public road by the police. Even those who stood in the vicinity of the conference *pandal* and the interested shop-owners in the bazaar were assaulted cruelly. But the proceedings of the conference went on with characteristic dignity. The righteous indignation aroused by the police atrocities permeated the entire town and the undaunted leaders organised a huge procession along the important roads exhorting the people not to lose grip over their composure and self-control. It was indeed a tribute to the people that they remained calm, having already come under the gentle influence of the creed of non-violence.

The conference appointed the Prakasam Committee to enquire into the unhappy incidents^{13a} and their report, based on direct

13. The conference began on 23 April and continued for the next few days. Mr. L. A. Subbarama Iyer was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The conference was held on a *huge* field near the railway station and the famous Bharata river. As Mr. A. K. Pillai says, it reminded one of the vast concourse of people that used to gather at Tirunavaya in connection with the historic *Mamankam* festival. On the eve of the formal conference, Mr. A. K. Pillai presided over a public meeting when the great scholar and orator, Mr. Paliath Cheriya Kunhunni Achan, spoke on the "Present political situation". There was so much enthusiasm in general that a few persons gave demonstration of *charka* spinning while the ladies donated their gold jewellery to the Tilak Swaraj Fund after hearing the inspiring speeches at the conference.

13a. Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon was a member of this committee. Mr. Hitchcock, District Superintendent of Police, Malabar, under whose direction the police outrage happened, took legal action against the members of

evidence, was immediately prescribed by the Government of Madras. The unjustifiable repressive policy¹⁴ was perhaps a blessing so far as it made the people dissatisfied with the Government's policy, unified all classes on the common platform of non-violence and infused into them a new spirit.

At the Ottapalam Conference a resolution was sponsored, intended to regulate the relations between the landlords and the tenants in Malabar but it led to great difference of opinion. For the sake of unity the entire consideration of the issue was postponed. The conference gave its full support to the decision on non-co-operation adopted by the Indian National Congress at Nagpur and requested all parents not to send their children to Government-aided schools but only to national institutions to be newly established. The conference further appealed to the lawyers to give up their practice, the merchants to boycott foreign goods, and the people to encourage the Ayurvedic system of medicine and to contribute to the Tilak Fund as members of the Congress.

Curiously enough, on the same day on which the Ottapalam Conference was held there met at Calicut, a conference of Conservatives and Moderates, inspired by Dr. Annie Besant who presided over it. This conference congratulated Lord Reading on his appointment as Viceroy, welcomed the visit of the Prince of Wales to India, exhorted the people to implement the Mountagu-Chelmsford reforms as a step to self-government and denounced non-co-operation as a hindrance to the progress of the country.¹⁵ A committee was formed, with the Zamorin and Dewan Bahadur M. Krishnan Nair as Presidents, to launch a counter-propaganda offensive against the non-co-operation movement. The supporters of the Government arranged similar conferences and formed similar committees in other parts of Malabar also to undermine the growing popularity of the Congress. It was the tragedy of Dr. Annie Besant who at one time had rallied the Indian nation that she alienated herself now from popular sympathies and aspirations and become, out of her own political convictions, a propagandist on behalf of the Government.

the Committee for their report but they did not defend themselves. Mr. Kesava Menon stated in court that he had no belief in the British sense of Justice and underwent the punishment awarded to him.

14. Incidents similar to those at Ottapalam happened at Calicut and later at Pookkottur and Tirurangadi which only served to reveal the anxiety and perplexity of the authorities.
15. Other resolutions were passed to congratulate the Zamorin for having opened the Zamorin's College to all castes and creeds and condemn the treatment accorded to third class passengers on the railways.

On 17 August 1921 Mr. Yakub Hassan and other leaders were set free. They were accorded an affectionate reception at a huge public meeting held at the Calicut beach. The meeting made the Congress-Khilafat bond stronger and thereby caused further bewilderment to the authorities. The flame was lit, no ill wind could blow it out.

The new wave of Gandhian ideology and patriotic fervour swept over the Princely States of Cochin and Travancore also.

In the State of Cochin which constituted a separate division under the Congress organisation, there broke out a riot at Trichur in 1921 apparently on account of the Dewan, Mr. T. Vijayaraghavachari's lack of tact, following which public meetings were prohibited in the State for one year. All political propaganda practically ceased. It was legally improper, except during a period of Martial law, to subject a whole Province or District to prohibitory order that would stifle political criticism. However Messrs. M. Narayana Menon, K. Velayudha Menon and K. Kesavan Kartha continued their political work in defiance of the Government. As early as April-May 1918, the All Kerala Nair Conference had met at Ayirur, which was presided over by Dewan Bahadur A. Govinda Pillai and addressed by Messrs. Paliath Cheria Kunhunni Achan and K. Ramakrishna Das. Mr. Achan's speech on national education conveyed to the large gathering the new message of the Congress. Both the speakers, along with Mr. Kottur Gopala Pillai,¹⁶ Editor of the *Kausthubham* toured the length and breadth of Travancore propagating nationalist ideals. In 1921 at the time of the Ahmedabad session of the Congress Mr. A. K. Pillai^{16a} arrived in India from England, responding to

16. Later he undertook the management of the *Kerala Kesari* published from Ernakulam.

16a. Mr. A. K. Pillai was born in a well-to-do family at Palakkal, near Thevalakkara, Quilon District on 16 April, 1893. In those days of conservatism, his father maintained, for the benefit of the local villagers, a school at which *avarna* students, in particular, imbibed the rudiments of Astrology and Ayurveda which were taught as extension subjects. After a chequered scholastic career he became a graduate of the University of Madras. Even as a student he had been rendering unofficial service to the Home Rule League which was acknowledged by Mrs. Besant. He next pursued the study of law at the Inner Temple, London, and at Gandhiji's call, as noted above, came back to India and plunged himself into the nationalist movement. Though Lala Lajpat Rai pressed him to join the Tilak School of Politics he rather chose Travancore as the area of his activity where, as an original member of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, he formed not less than seventy local committees in the course of 1921. He did pioneering work in bringing the Princely State of

the call of Gandhiji and without completing his studies in Law at the Inner Temple. Under instructions from Gandhiji he also took up political work in Travancore. He had participated, as we noted earlier, in the Ottapalam Conference, along with other delegates from Travancore, like Messrs. K. Ramakrishna Das, K. G. Sankar, M. Mathunni and G. Raman Menon. Under the new set-up, Mr. Pillai became the Secretary of the Travancore District Congress Committee. Mr. N. S. Nair, Managing Editor of *Malaysia Malayali* also resigned his lucrative job in Malaya, came back to Travancore and propagated Congress ideals in the country, particularly in Karunagapally Taluk. The Congress workers formed several committees in South Travancore.

In Travancore there was sixty-four Congress Committees spread over the several Taluks¹⁷ which carried on vigorous political propaganda. A few ardent volunteers devoted their entire time to constructive work and they were fortunate to secure co-operation from a number of public-spirited young men. Teachers in schools under

Travancore into the frame-work of the Indian National Congress, applying his talent as well as patrimony. After courting arrest at the time of the Vaikom Sathyagraha, he continued, on release, his fight against autocracy. He was selected as a member of the cultural delegation under Dr. M. A. Ansari sent by the Indian National Congress with fraternal greetings to China in 1927. In 1929 he visited England and the leading countries in Europe. He represented the London Branch of the Indian National Congress at the Cologne Conference of the League against Imperialism. As an official representative of the Indian States Peoples' Association he placed the views of Indians before the British public when the Butler Committee was claiming public attention. He was in constant touch Mr. M. N. Roy. He was called to the Bar by the Inner Temple, London, in 1930. He returned to India full of enthusiasm but was disappointed at the turn of events ending in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. He next set up legal practice in Burma where he took keen interest in Labour problems. A progressive republican, he demanded a radical revision of the constitution of the Indian National Congress so that it might really become a powerful anti-imperialist organisation. He expired on 5 October, 1949.

Trivandrum, Quilon and Kottayam were the three divisions in Travancore in each of which Congress had the divisional headquarters. In the first two centres constructive work went on actively. The Kottayam division however sprang into political activity more or less only on the starting of the abstention movement. Messrs. P. K. Kunju, David Mahapillai, Mathunni, C. Kesavan, V. Achutha Menon, Jacob, Mammen Kannantanam and Y. Ramaswamy Iyer were associated with the Congress in the early days in Travancore. Mr. George Joseph, editor of the *South Indian Mail* and Mrs. Joseph took up the cause of the Congress at Madurai.

the Ramakrishna Mission like Mr. Madhuranayagam Pillai and Mr. N. S. Pandalai sowed the seeds of nationalism in their spheres of activity. The *Swarat* founded in 1921 was being edited by Mr. A.K. Pillai and did a great service in disseminating the ideals of the Indian National Congress among the masses. The visit of the Prince of Wales to India was the occasion for an effective hartal throughout the State, observed under instructions from the All-India Congress Committee; much enthusiasm was evinced in Trivandrum, Quilon and Alleppey where the shops remained closed. Mr. A. K. Pillai, along with Mr. Padmanabha Pillai, was consequently arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment but they were released later under orders from the High Court of Travancore. Though subsequently at the Nagpur session of the Congress the Princely States had been exempted from active political work including the boycott of courts, Legislatures and educational institutions, the workers in Travancore continued to be active.

The Students' Club was a body organised in Trivandrum in February 1921: this body passed a¹⁸ resolution protesting against the aspersion cast on it by the Dewan Mr. Raghaviah.¹⁹ But the resolution was subsequently withdrawn on an assurance given by Prof. C. V. Chandrasekharan that the Dewan had not meant anything discourteous.²⁰ According to the rules of the 'Students' Club' it could take proper action against any individual or institution that had done injustice to any of its members. The members of the Club arranged a non-co-operation demonstration, influenced, as they were, by the Gandhian doctrines. "This type of feeling" wrote Mr. C. B. Cunningham, Commissioner of Police, "is manifesting itself at other places among the students but it is not, I think, likely to develop to extremes and is important mainly from the point of view of college and school authorities. The Alleppey Mohamadan boys are reported to have been instructed by their parents to return their 'Peace Medals' but it does not appear that the medals have yet been returned".²¹

On 22 February, 1921 a non-co-operation procession consisting of the members of the Students' Club was organised without any previous notice and a meeting held on the Parade Ground in Trivandrum at which Mr. K. G. Shankar, a student, characterised the arrest of

18. Letter from A. Sankunni Warriar to the Dewan, dated 11 February, 1921.

19. He had become the Dewan of Travancore in July, 1920.

20. From T. K. Narayana Pillai to the Dewan of Travancore, dated 20 February, 1921.

21. From C. B. Cunningham to the Chief Secretary, N. Rajaram Rao, dated 25 February 1921.

Mr. Yakub Hassan as a high-handed invasion of elementary rights. "In the fight", he said, "arms are not our weapons but non-co-operation. Why should Travancore be backward when the rest of India was moving onward?"²²

It would appear that Mr. A. K. Pillai opened a Congress office at Thevally in Quilon town in partnership with Mr. K. G. Shankar for propaganda in favour of non-co-operation.²³ Mr. Raghaviah was afraid that the movement would accentuate sectarian differences in the State and wanted the officials to take steps to prevent the same in Central and North Travancore. It was the political consciousness generated at this time that found expression in the students' strike at Trivandrum later in the same year.

Thus Travancore and Cochin came under the influence of the Gandhian doctrines and began to march with the times. No part of India could isolate itself from an all-pervading and integrated struggle against imperialism.

22. From T. R. Vaidyanatha Iyer to the D. S. P. dated 24-2-1921.

23. Confidential letter from Dewan Raghaviah to Pitt, dated 22 April, 1921.

CHAPTER 9

FLAMES OF FURY

The political atmosphere was quite peaceful in Malabar when the leaders of Calicut were released from jail in August, 1921. But South Malabar was soon destined to be engulfed in a huge conflagration that broke the harmony of social relationship for some time and compelled several families to leave their beloved homes in search of personal safety.

The conflagration was the Moplah rising of 1921. The Moplahs of Malabar were educationally backward. The bulk of the community formed petty traders and cultivators in the remote hilly tracts of Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks. The occupation of Malabar by Hyder Ali and Tippu and the forced conversion that ensued swelled their number and strengthened their solidarity. Prompted by agrarian discontent and poverty, religious fervour and their own innate martial spirit, they had violated law and order on several occasions in the nineteenth century. Though the Tenants Improvement Act, 1887, (superseded by Act 1 of 1900) did much to save the tenants from ruinous eviction, fanaticism continued to be whetted by illiteracy. The repressive policy adopted by the Government produced a communal sense of responsibility and the enlightened elements of the community began to range themselves on the side of law and order. The opening up of the fanatical zone, including Ernad and Valluvanad, by the construction of roads, the judicious distribution of the police force and the stationing of troops at Malappuram gave some immunity to the region from violent outbreaks. The Moplah Outrages Act enacted by the Government in 1854 was another weapon by which their insurgent proclivities were sought to be repressed.

The Indian National Congress had extended moral support to the Khilafat Movement. Congress-Khilafat organisations started active work in Malabar. Mr. K. M. Maulavi Saheb played no mean role in such organisational work in the Taluks of Ernad, Valluvanad and Calicut and some areas in the Ponnani Taluk. The Khilafat Conference at Kundotti in November, 1920 and the Congress-Khilafat Conference at Calicut held in January, 1921 constituted important landmarks in the progress of the movement.

It is not possible to analyse clearly the causes of the outbreak of 1921. There is a view that it was due to reasons other than political,

but the Khilafat movement¹ evidently formed its background. The immediate cause seems to have had both religious and economic complexion. After the cessation of the first World War, the young Muslims, trained in the art of warfare, were discharged from the army. Caught in the jaws of unemployment and poverty, they led a precarious life while a rise in prices aggravated their misery. The call of the Khilafat, coupled with the police atrocities, under Mr. Hitchcock's direction, perpetrated on some Muslim youths at the time of the Ottapalam Conference, excited them and the spark blazed forth into a terrible conflagration. The Government was anxious that the Khilafat Movement should not rouse the passions of the Moplahs. The Collector of Malabar passed an order prohibiting Khilafat meetings in Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks where they formed the majority of the population. Messrs. U. Gopala Menon, K. Madhavan Nair, K. M. Maulavi Saheb and Variyamkunnath Kunhahamad Haji were served with notices to that effect in February, 1921, for, already an agitation had been launched for the repeal of the Moplah Outrages Act. The holding of many meetings, in this way, was prevented. This ban under Section 144 made the Moplahs more defiant.

Mr. K. Madhavan Nair has enumerated² several particular instances in which the sentiments of the Moplahs had been wounded by the Government: the attempt of the police to arrest some Khilafat volunteers at Thirurangadi and their persecution of several innocent Moplah families in the locality; the police assault on those who wore 'Gandhi Caps' at Thirurangadi and on the members of the Khilafat Committee at Malappuram; the undignified behaviour of the police towards the Kunhi Thangal, a respected religious head of Malappuram; their dishonouring of the Khilafat flag at Thirurangadi and prosecution of the Khilafat workers at Ponnani and Thirur; and their attempted arrest of Mr. Valakke Veetil Muhammad, Secretary of the Pookkottur Khilafat Committee, for his alleged theft of a gun belonging to the sixth Raja of Nilambur.

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1. Mrs. Besant refers to the "ghastly misery" and the "heart-breaking" wretchedness" caused by the Moplah out-break which she ascribes directly "to the violent and unscrupulous attacks on the Government made by the Non-Co-operators and the Khilafatists and the statements scattered broadcast, predicting the speedy disappearance of British rule and the establishment of Indian rule, and the establishment of Swaraj, as proclaimed by the N. C. O. and Khilafat Raj as understood by the Moplahs from the declaration of the Khilafatists." She adds that the harangues in the Mosques spread the khilafatist message everywhere and that the Moplahs "saw the N. C. O. preachers appealing for help to their religious leaders" and were "fighting for what they consider as religion, and in a manner they consider as religious".
 2. See his evidence tendered before the Special Court formed to try rebels.

According to Mr. Gayatri Vallabha Iyer, the Khilafat Movement had little to do with the riots which were motivated by poverty and the bad treatment that the Moplahs used to receive at the hands of the landlords.* The insult to which the Thangals or religious leaders and respectable Moplahs as at Kalpakancherry were subjected by the police infuriated them all the more. The police used to raid every Khilafat Committee office and suppress every Khilafat activity in Ernad. They also encouraged a section of the Moplahs to fight against the Khilafat movement. Thus an anti-Khilafat meeting was held at Ponnani on 24 July, 1921, on the same day on which a Khilafat meeting had been arranged there. Only through tact a scuffle was avoided. Mr. Ali Musaliar, a native of Nellikutha, who had a large number of followers, exhorted the Moplahs to save their religious sentiments even by using force. The psychological background was thus made ready for the rebellion by general dissatisfaction and despair.

According to Mr. C. A. Innes, the Khilafat Volunteer Corps with prescribed uniform was being formed in different parts of Ernad, particularly at Thirurangadi, as early as February, 1921. At Calicut itself, troops had to be called out and force used on February when a large crowd of Moplahs had assembled on the sea-shore in violation of Section 144 Cr. P. C. Mr. Ali Musaliar was preaching at Thirurangadi that the Moplahs should help Gandhiji and Ali brothers, that Government offices should be done away with and that the Amir of Afghanistan would render all help in overthrowing the British rule. The priests kept themselves in close touch with the developments of the Khilafat agitation throughout India. A Khilafat meeting was held at Thirurangadi in July, 1921. There was rumblings of trouble at the end of the same month when the Nilambur palace was broken into; on the search, by the police, of Mr. Vatakke Veettil Muhammad's house the next day, a crowd of 2,000 Moplahs gathered at Pookkottur, six miles from Malappuram.³ The police managed to disperse them

3. He was Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Second Kerala Provincial Conference held at Palghat in 1923.
4. According to Mr. Iyer, all the troubles in the nineteenth century were due to the unhappy landlord-tenant relationship. Mr. Logan, Collector of Malabar, had opined that there would be occasional rising as long as the fanatical Moplahs remained poor and needy. In 1919 the Hidayathul Muslim Sabha had presented a memorandum to Lord Willingdon, Governor of Madras during his visit to Manjeri, detailing the grievances of the Moplahs but no action appears to have been taken.
5. "The Khilafat Raj is established there (Malabar); on August 1, 1921 sharp to the date first announced by Mr. Gandhi for the beginning of Swaraj and the vanishing of the British rule, a Police Inspector was surrounded by Moplahs, revolting against that rule. From that date onwards, thousands

tactfully, but withdrew without being able to arrest him. The Moplahs resolved never to yield to the police. Early in August there was some disturbance in Thanur.

The Government decided to nip the trouble in the bud by a surprise raid on Thirurangadi where they expected to arrest nearly twenty-four Moplah leaders. A modified form of Martial Law was proclaimed. On 19 August Mr. Thomas, District Magistrate and Mr. Hitchcock, District Superintendent of Police, with a large contingent of police, proceeded from Calicut under cover of darkness without giving scent to the Moplahs. They entered the Khilafat Office, seized the records and searched the local Mosque. The rumour of desecration of the famous Mambram Mosque brought an angry, challenging crowd but they were driven back with difficulty.⁶ Moplahs from Tanur, Tirur and Kottakkal began to converge on Thirurangadi. Firing took place and Mr. Rowley and Lt. Johnstone were cut down by the frenzied crowd. Reinforcements sent from Malappuram were rendered ineffective by the rebels. "As if at a pre-arranged signal, the railway lines were torn up, telegraph wires cut, stations attacked and attempts made to destroy bridges. Next day the column with great difficulty made its way back to Calicut by the railway line and met with rebel activity upto within six miles of Calicut."⁷

Mr. Thomas, Mr. Hitchcock and the police party had evidently gone back to Calicut encountering several difficulties on the way. They left law and order into the hands of the rebels. Perhaps they were absolutely helpless in the circumstances beyond their control. The mob set fire to the Taluk Office, police station and other Government buildings at Tirurangadi. For one week the whole area of Tirurangadi and Malappuram was ruled by the rebels and the writ of the British Government did not run there. The entire District was, for some time, cut off from communication with the world outside. Even at the Calicut headquarters the situation remained abnormal. At Thirurangadi Mr. Ali Musaliar assumed the title of 'King'.

of the forbidden war-knives were secretly made and hidden away, and on August 20, the rebellion broke out. Khilafat flags were hoisted on Police Stations and Government Offices". *New India*, dated 29 November, 1921.

6. According to the evidence later given before the Special Court by Mr. Amu Sahib, Deputy Superintendent of Police, he was in the party headed by the District Magistrate, the Deputy Inspector-General and the District Superintendent of Police, Mr. Hitchcock. He deposed that when they knew that a party of Moplahs was coming from Pookkottur to attack them, they (the police party) marched forward to meet them. The rebels were driven away.

7 See Account by Innes.

The Khilafat kingdom appeared to have been established. The general disorder soon enveloped Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks entirely and Ponnani Taluk partially. Subsequently Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon, K. Madhavan Nair, Muhammad Abdur Rahman Sahab and E. Moidu Moulavi reached Tirurangadi with the District Collector's permission to pacify the people and to advise them against giving a violent twist to the developments.

Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon now took pains to see that the disturbances did not spread in other areas; on account of the Proclamation of Martial Law there was little freedom of movement in Ernad Taluk. Mr. Menon sent Mr. Gopala Menon,^{7a} then a student actively interested in Congress work, with a letter to Mr. Thomas, District Magistrate for permission to enter the Ernad Taluk. Mr. Thomas ascribed the troubles to the Congress but yet consented to Mr. Menon's tour in Ernad. Accordingly on 26 August Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon started with twenty-four followers.⁸ They were received at Mambram by several men led by Mr. Lava Kutty Sahab,⁹ Khilafat worker and now Minister under Mr. Ali Musaliar,¹⁰ and escorted to Tirurangadi by a force, numbering more than hundred. Mr. Kesava Menon advised Mr. Ali Musaliar that it would be better for the rebels to surrender so that Tirurangadi and the local population might be saved from further military action. But Mr. Kunhalavi Sahab,¹¹ commanding Mr. Musaliar's forces, was against such surrender, and the latter also was reluctant to act against his wishes.

Mr. Ali Musaliar had proclaimed that no Hindu should be molested and no property looted in areas within his Jurisdiction. On

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- 7a. Clad in coarse Khadi and wearing a Gandhi cap, he met the Collector in his camp in defiance of an irritated British military official—an act which very few would have dared to do in those days of excitement. He also carried a letter from the Congress leaders in Malabar to Gandhiji, camping at Coimbatore, at a time when either party was prevented from contacting the other.
 8. The party included Messrs. K. V. Gopala Menon, U. Gopala Menon, Kombrabail, M. Gopala Menon, Ponnmatath Moideen Koya, Muhammad Abdur Rahman, K. Madhava Menon, T. V. Chathu Kutty Nair, Madhavanam Govinda Kurup and others. (See *Kazhinja Kalam* by Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon).
 9. Mr. Lava Kutty Sahab seems to have committed suicide later.
 10. Mr. Menon records that Mr. Musaliar must have been about sixty-five years of age at the time. He was fair and of medium height, clad in white dress reaching upto the feet.
 11. Mr. Kunhalavi Sahab died later in a clash with the military forces near Pannamangalam (See *Kazhinja Kalam*).

30 August the police and the military forces reached Thirurāngadi as the leader and his men were entrenched within the local Mosque. Firing started on the next day. A party of rebels dashed out with daggers and swords under the leadership of Mr. Kumhalavi Sahab and after killing a few escaped into the jungles to the North. Those inside the Mosque, after a further struggle, gave it up, hoisted the white flag and surrendered. Mr. Ali Musaliar, was captured and taken to Thirur.¹²

The rebels were very active at Pookkottur and Melmuri where they seized all available guns. Led by Mr. Abdul Haji they marched to Nilambur attacking, on the way, the police station at Edavanna. They had their own grudge against the Raja's family at Nilambur in regard to the action taken against Mr. Vadakke Veettil Muhammad; most of them were disgruntled tenants too. The members of the Raja's family, however, escaped. As Mr. A. K. Pillai comments, the anarchy was not so much due to the rebels as due to the Government servants and police officers who had practically abandoned their posts of duty.

The rebels' operations in August were directed against the British Government and the anti-Khilafat parties. Little had they done to convert or to persecute the Hindus. Their attack on the Nilambur palace, their looting of the Nambuthiri Bank at Manjeri and the cancellation of all debts due to the latter revealed an attitude of hostility more to the capitalist-landlords than to the Hindus.

So far the rebels had no definite desire except to attack the Government offices or plunder the property of the landlords. They wanted only economic satisfaction, apart from the psychological satisfaction of wreaking vengeance on the Government. It was at this stage that Mr. Variyamkunnath Kunhahamad Haji,¹³ a relative of Mr. Ali Musaliar, assumed their leadership. He checked the vagaries of the rebels and gave strict orders against any kind of persecution or plunder. On 24 August, he made an announcement at Manjeri that no harm would be done to the Hindus.¹⁴ He tried and punished his followers who violated his orders.

12. He was later shot to death.

13. "Wearing a fez cap, khilafat uniform and badge, and with sword in hand" says Mr. A. K. Gopalan, "he styled himself the Raja of the Hindus, Emir of the Muslims and Colonel of the Khilafat army and became virtually the king of Ernad and Valluvanad". (*Kerala. Past and Present*, page 28).

14. The British Government charged Mr. M. P. Narayana Menon of Angadipuram for having been present at the time of his declaration and for having, in a speech, incited the people to wage war against the Emperor and British rule in other parts of Malabar as well. Mr. Menon denied

A severer form of Martial Law was now declared, a movable column sent from Bangalore and a military officer appointed, to be assisted by a special civil officer. The relief of Malappuram that had been cut off was an absolute necessity. A military force marched from Calicut which, on the first day, could cover only a distance of eighteen miles upto Kundotti on account of the havoc already wrought by the rebels. They reached Pookkottur which, with its hills and forests, had provided a good hiding place for the rebels. The battle of Pookkottur was fought on 25 August. Unseen, the rebels fired on the troops from the various sides of the hills but later changed their tactics. Rifle fire was changed into hand-to-hand fighting between the detachment and the rebels numbering nearly one thousand. Armed with spears, swords and daggers, the Moplahs fought with peculiar frenzy and nearly three hundred of them were cut off. The relieving column could, with a few casualties, finally make way to Malappuram, which they reached on 28 August. H. M. S. *Comus* had already arrived on the coast on 25 August and did much to restore tranquillity at a time when the garrison and the police had been depleted for the relief operations at Malappuram.

Military posts were established at Vandur and Pandikkad but the efforts of the troops to get into contact with the rebels were in vain. The Moplahs no longer stood forth to fight to death but they broke themselves into disorganised groups ambushing convoys and causing unexpected casualties among those who were suspected of helping the troops. Their total number was approximately 10,000.

Sheer despair drove the Moplahs to mad adventure. The position of the Hindus in the inland regions was most embarrassing for they had to pass no information to the troops, unfamiliar with the topography of the land, about the hiding places and movements of the rebels lest they should be arrested or otherwise persecuted for their pro-Khilafat proclivities. The rebels therefore became bitterly hostile to the Hindus and the leaders like Mr. Kunhahamad Haji

the charge later before the Special Court that tried him. Several citizens submitted a memorial to the Government denying the charge. He was sentenced to fourteen years' rigorous imprisonment. He was an ardent Congress worker, noted for his frankness. In spite of agitation all over India for his release, the Government of Madras remained obdurate. They offered to release him on condition that he would not participate in politics but he gave no such undertaking, conscious of his innocence. After twelve years of incarceration he was finally released. When Sir K. V. Reddy became Law Member to the Government of Madras.

lost what little control they had over them. Thus happened the tragic transformation of an economic struggle into a communal trouble under the urge of short-sighted fanaticism. Hereafter there was an orgy of dacoities, burning of liquor-shops, blocking of roads, destruction of bridges and culverts, persecution and forced conversion of the Hindus even while the troops had started their mopping-up operations. The Moplah ex-soldiers found it easy to indulge in acts of sabotage. In the course of the rebellion the Moplahs were about to loot the Government Treasury in Ponnani but Mr. K. Kelappan Nair who, at that time, was doing Congress propaganda in the Taluk, boldly faced the insurgents and told them they could advance only over his dead body. The Treasury was saved. The Government Treasuries at Manjeri and Perintalmanna were looted on 21 and 22 September, police records destroyed, prisoners in jails let off, and a large number of guns seized. By the middle of October the activities of the rebels became vigorous in Arikode area. They raided local villages and indulged in looting. The inland part of Calicut, from Manjeri to Puthuppadi, suffered most from savagery. The Malabar Special Police and Fraser's and Charsley's Companies dealt with the rebels in this region. It was "decided to bring additional troops into the area, of a type accustomed to jungle fighting and the 3/70 Burma Rifles and 2/8th Gurkhas accompanied by a Wireless Section, a Company of Sappers, half the 20th Draught Mule Corps and other transport details arrived in the middle of October".¹⁵ A special police force also was raised.

The rebels sustained a crushing blow at Melmuri on 25 October. The less desperate elements offered to surrender themselves. The Government's offer to overlook offences against Government property committed prior to 26 August, 1921 on condition of surrender and assistance in the arrest of wanted criminals in certain areas did not at first meet with positive response. The Gurkha force camping at Pandikkad was surrounded in November by about two thousand men of Mr. Chembrasserri Seethy Koya Thangal, under cover of darkness. Then also a hand-to-hand fighting took place in which about two hundred rebels lost their lives. At Konnara, a village in Ernad, the Moplah rebels fired, on one night, on the military force resting in the local jungle. Here also there was serious loss on either side.

As a result of the military drive across the country from 11 to 25 November, 1921 the moral of the rebels was gradually broken. Their supplies were cut off. Mr. Seethy Koya Thangal¹⁶ and others were

15. See Account by Innes.

16. He was later shot to death at Malappuram.

captured. Mr. V. Kunhamad Haji¹⁷ escaped from the troops on Pandalur Hills but surrendered at Veetikunnu on Choladi Hill on 6 January 1922. By 25 February, 1922 Martial Law was withdrawn. The troops were gradually removed while the Special Malabar Police continued to occupy the strategic posts in the rebellious area. They ultimately became a permanent force, their strength being fixed at 600.

"The active part" says Innes "played by the Mappillah women especially in the early stages by inciting both men and boys deserves notice. Two are known to have been shot in actual fighting and 157 were known to have taken part in definite offences.....".¹⁸

The storm at last blew over. After the cessation of operations a Special Tribunal of three judges was constituted.¹⁹ followed by three courts of Special Judges and nine Special Magistrates.

Altogether, it was a futile rebellion that only wrought havoc, with no corresponding advantage.²⁰ It was primarily confined only to two Taluks in South Malabar.²¹ The region to the North of Calicut was practically free from trouble. The rebellion was characterised both by pitched battles fought at Pookkottur, Thirurangadi, Pandalur and other places and guerilla operations and ambush. In the course of the convulsions, several official records were destroyed. Many persons were butchered or flayed or burnt alive, many subjected to shameful indignities. Several families were rendered homeless. The economic life was paralysed.

17. His followers had earlier murdered a Moplah Head Constable at Mutikad and Khan Bahadur Chekkutti Sahab, retired Inspector of Police at Anakkayam. Mr. Kunhamad Haji was shot to death on 20 January, 1922.
18. See Innes' Account.
19. As the number of prisoners increased special cages were constructed at selected places to accommodate them. The total number of reported murders was 468, of decoities 5941 and of cases of arson, 352. 320 temples had been destroyed and in Ernad Taluk alone there were 900 cases of forced conversion. A special jail was opened at Alipuram near Bellary. Many of the convicted persons were sent to the Andamans to languish in jails for several years. Many were executed.
20. "An idea of the fierceness of the campaign can be gauged by the heavy casualties-43 killed and 126 wounded among the troops and over 3000 killed among the Moplahs". Kanji Dwarakadas. *India's Fight for Freedom*, pp. 179-80.
21. It affected Thirurangadi, Pookkottur, Kalikavu, Pandalur, Malappuram, Manjeri, Perintalmanna, Pandikkad, and Tirur mainly.

It was indeed difficult to look after nearly 20,000 refugees from the affected areas who, leaving their homes behind them, clustered at Calicut and Trichur. Their distress was beyond imagination. A Central Relief Committee was soon formed to rehabilitate them. Houses had to be rebuilt, food and clothing given. Normal communications had to be restored. Mr. P. Ramunni Menon collected funds at Bombay for relief work while on the initiative of Mr. A. K. Pillai, the All-India Congress Committee contributed a big sum for the same purpose. Gandhiji took sympathetic interest and appealed to the generous elements in the country to help Malabar with adequate provisions of food and clothing. Mr. K. Madhavan Nair and Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon were supervising the relief operations at Calicut while Mr. Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad²² was in charge of the relief centre at Trichur. Altogether there seem to have been nearly twenty-two relief camps.

Political work in Malabar suffered. As long as Martial Law was in force the nationalist workers, Gandhiji not excepted, were prohibited entry into the regions covered by it. However, as noted earlier, a party of Congressmen including Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon and Mr. K. Madhavan Nair visited the trouble spots and tried to stem the tide of rebellion but their efforts did not produce fruit as much as desired. No ordinary Congressmen practically dared to violate the prohibitory order regarding entry into the trouble spots. Of course on Mr. Muhammad Abdur Rahman's initiative, Mr. Madhavan Nair and Mr. M. P. Narayana Menon had requested the rebel leaders at Pookkottur to accept the creed of non-violence and court arrest; they might have done so but unfortunately the police raid on the Thirurangadi Mosque excited them violently; and the Congress leaders returned disappointed. Yet they used all the influence they could command among the Moplahs to avoid untoward developments, especially at Manjeri. It was a misfortune, comments Mr. A. K. Pillai, that Hindus in Malabar did not have among them an individual of the calibre of Mr. Ganesh Sankar Vidyarthi²³. If the rebellion had an

22. He was the Editor of the *Lokamanya*. He was charged with sedition against the British Government and sentenced, later in 1923, to six months' imprisonment along with Mr. Sebastian.

23. When the Indian National Congress met in session at Karachi in 1931, there occurred an unfortunate communal riot in Kanpur. The town was observing a hartal in connection with the execution of Sardar Bhagat Singh and his two comrades when the riot broke out. Mr. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi was killed by a "frenzied mob" of persons whom he was trying to help. "In the pride of his youth he willingly offered his life for the cause he loved and served" as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru remarks, "and foolish hands struck him down and deprived Cawnpore and the province of

economic goal, a definite programme and proper leadership it might have caused revolutionary changes in society, without degenerating into a futile and destructive convulsion benefiting nobody. It weakened the peaceful Khilafat movement and arrested the nation's march to its ultimate political goal. The injury done to social harmony took time to heal²⁴. It was a lesson for the future that the path of non-violence was not strewn with roses.

The gulf between the foreign Government and Indians got wider. Everybody admitted that the inhuman treatment meted out to the Moplah prisoners culminating in the wagon tragedy²⁵ did credit to no civilised Government.

The Indian National Congress, at its session held at Ahmedabad in 1921 passed a resolution to the effect that the rebellion was the result of neither the Khilafat Movement nor the Non-Co-operation Movement and that there would have been no perpetration of atrocities if the creed of non-violence had firmly taken root in the soil. If Gandhiji and Congress workers had been permitted by the authorities to visit the disturbed areas they might have been able to restore peace, harmony and the Rule of Law.

the brightest of their jewels" (*Autobiography*, p. 269-70). The Indian National Congress noted "with pride that a prominent worker of the first rank was found sacrificing his precious life in the attempt to rescue those in danger and restore peace and sanity in the midst of strife and insanity". (*History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. 1, p. 457-58).

24. "It was this tragic outbreak that did more than anything to wreck the facade of Hindu-Muslim Unity which Gandhiji's adoption of the Muslim cause had for the time created". Kanji Dwarakadas. *India's Fight For Freedom*, 1913-1937. p. 179.
25. While the Moplah prisoners numbering ninety were being taken to the Bellary Jail, about sixty-four of them died of asphyxiation in a closed wagon in the train between Olavakkot and Podanur stations. The sad tragedy occurred on 10 November, 1921.

CHAPTER 10

SPIRIT OF YOUTH

A faint echo of the convulsions in Malabar was heard in distant Trivandrum during the same year, 1921. Some unhappy incidents, involving students, occurred there. The demand of the students centred round the specific issue of enhancement of fees and one should not exaggerate the political importance of their upsurge. Yet to some extent the event made the people of Travancore think in terms of the ideal of responsible government in the State. It served to bring to the surface the undercurrents of conflict between the Government and the people. The students however paid dearly during the process of the struggle.

Superficially the incidents may appear to have been a series of isolated and lawless acts on the part of undisciplined students, little connected with the main stream of freedom struggle in India. But a careful examination of the documents establishes the fact that the agitation of the students was to some extent influenced by contemporary developments in other parts of India. Gandhiji had embarked on his historic campaign of "*swaraj* in one year" and his discourses, coupled with the fiery speeches of Ali Brothers, had whetted the nationalist spirit of the youth. South Malabar was in turmoil at the time. The air was thick with feelings of hostility to British imperialism. It is no wonder that the young students flew into a sudden paroxysm of excitement. The enhancement of school fees in Travancore was therefore more an occasion than a cause for the students' strike. It was an explosion of deep-lying, simmering dissatisfaction. The speeches made by the students and the pamphlets issued by them during their agitation amply indicate that at least some of them possessed a political awareness and cherished a sentiment against British imperialism and its representative, the Dewan who, they felt, was subjecting their parents and guardians to acute financial stress by enhancing the fees. The students revealed a tendency to sympathise with political agitations, calculated to embarrass the Government. Mr. B. Nanu Pillai, District Superintendent of Police, reported that though "the students' strike was outwardly under the pretext of the recent increase of school fees, on a confidential enquiry I learn that the agitation is the result of the Non-Co-operation Movement".¹

1. Nanu Pillai's letter dated 25 August 1921.

Early in 1919 there had been a strike of the students of the Higher Grade English School at Trivandrum. It appeared strange for 'Indian students are far too law-abiding to strike without very strong provocation'.² In 1919-20 there was an incident at Trivandrum which appeared to embitter the relations between the students and the police. This also was a matter for surprise because as Mr. Pitt, the Commissioner of Police, wrote: "It has been stated in one Journal that the police and students are enemies the world over, but in my experience this is not the case in Southern India".⁴

The Government of Travancore had found that the expenditure on account of the Education Department was rapidly going up.⁵ Mr. M. Krishnan Nair, Dewan, appointed a committee "to devise measures which, without adding substantially to the existing grants from the State revenue will set free funds for educational development". The committee reported that the levy of a small fee in respect of Primary Schools would give relief to the Government and enable them to set apart more funds for the extension of education and that it would be feasible to increase the fees in Vernacular Middle Schools for boys.⁶ They added that all schools, High and Middle, other than six English High Schools, might be handed over to private agencies.⁷ The idea of transferring the English High Schools to the private sector was embarrassing to the Headmasters who met in conference and recommended the enhancement of schools fees.

Subsequently a larger conference was held under the presidency of the Dewan. Prominent officials and non-officials attended it. They too recommended the enhancement of fees. The Government resolved to increase the fees in Vernacular Schools where English was

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2. Letter from L. C. Hodgson Director of Public Instruction, Travancore, to the Chief Secretary, 2 February, 1919. (No. 701/Edn/1919).
 3. There was a meeting in Tambanur Hall to congratulate the Dewan on the passing of Regulation 1 of 1095 (1919-20). Some students who wanted to enter the Hall to protest against the proposed resolution were badly handled. The students were smarting under this disgrace. (Pitt's letter to the Chief Secretary).
 4. Letter from Pitt to the Chief Secretary R. O. C. No. 1005/Genl/1921 dated 13 October, 1921.
 5. The expenditure was Rs 25.83 lakhs in 1919 and Rs 29.90 lakhs in 1920; it was estimated at Rs 32.21 lakhs in 1921 though the actuals were expected to exceed the figure.
 6. The committee was of the view that an Education Cess might be imposed and an Income Tax levied to raise the required amount.
 7. Proceedings: Order dated 17 September, 1921.

proposed to be compulsorily taught by fifty per cent and the fees in the preparatory class and the upper classes in English Schools, by half a rupee each *per mensem* the girls being made to pay half fees. The new scheme was to be put into effect from 17th August, 1921. The fees thus were enhanced in the middle of the year, which action was considered by many persons to be improper.

The enhancement of fees was the herald of a storm. It aroused the passions of the students. They decided to have a trial of strength with the authorities by resorting to strike. On 25 August, 1921 the excited students of High Schools in Trivandrum unfortunately took the law into their own hands and indulged in some ugly acts before they held a meeting at the Police Parade Ground. The police, under instructions from the District Magistrate, did not interfere⁸. Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai who presided over the meeting was of the view that the students' grievances might be embodied in a memorial to be presented to the Government in a constitutional manner and he added that "it is unfair to resort to agitation to attempt to set at naught constituted authority". The meeting was addressed by Mr. C. Krishnan Nair, a student, (who in his later days was destined to play an important role in Delhi politics) as well as by Mr. A. P. Nair whose declamations were characterised by vehemence. The latter attributed the unpopular measure to those elements in the services who always did things to the disadvantage of the country. The meeting adopted a resolution viewing "with sorrow the decision of Government to enhance fees in schools" and requesting them that "in view of the present unsatisfactory economic condition of the people they may be pleased to reconsider their order".

The incident of 25 August was as disconcerting to the popular leaders as it was embarrassing to the Government. It appeared to assume a larger proportion than expected by the authorities. On the suggestion of a deputation who waited on the Chief Secretary, the schools were closed for the time being but the agitation continued unabated.¹⁰

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8. The Director of Public Instruction was of the view that if the police authorities had firmly handled the situation, the strike could have been nipped in the bud, (R. O. C. No. 1005/1 Gen. of 21 dated 13-10-1921). It was also impossible to collect a large number of policemen as most of them were not kept in barracks.
 9. Report of the District Superintendent of Police, Trivandrum dated 25 August 1921.
 10. The deputation consisted of Messrs. P. K. Kesava Pillai, V. S. Subrahmanya Iyer, M. K. Narayana Pillai, E. Subramania Iyer, K. C. Eapen, G. Parameswaran Pillai, K. Paul and Padmanabha Kukiliya.

Public opinion was exercised over the enhancement of fees in the middle of the academic year. A public meeting was held in every village or town in the State to condemn the Government's action. The meetings at Neyyattinkara and Quilon were presided over by Mr. N. K. Padmanabha Pillai and Mr. P. Karunakara Menon respectively. At Quilon a committee was constituted¹¹ to take suitable measures if the Government would not relent. Meetings were held in Punalur, Kunnathur, Alwaye, Paravur, Chavara, Kottayam, Alleppey, Mavelikkara, Kayamkulam and a number of other places in the States. On 2 September the citizens of Trivandrum met in the Tambanur Hall and repeated their request to the Government to cancel the new order.

The Managers of Private Schools thought that the new measure would be a source of additional income to them and supported the Government. Some of them conducted vehement propaganda against the strike to the effect that it was deliberately launched to force the hands of the Government to abandon the scheme of separation of Devaswom management from the Land Revenue Department, which would have conferred civil equality on Christians, Muslims and Ezhavas. Thus an unfortunate communal twist was attempted to be given to the issue by some interested sections. The police was aware of the dangers of such an interpretation.¹²

On 2 September the Government issued a press communique, taking serious notice of the strike, warning against any breach of discipline or act of lawlessness and intimidation and exhorting the parents to give proper guidance to their wards.

On 3 September a meeting was held at Sankumukham beach, Trivandrum, and on the basis of a decision then taken, the students approached the Fort premises on the next day to represent their grievances directly to the Maharaja. But to their disappointment, they found an array of the army, cavalry and police. They were dispersed but a delegation was permitted to wait on the Dewan. The student leader of the deputation, Mr. T. N. Kunhiraman Nair explained to the Dewan the plight of several poor families who could little afford to pay the enhanced fee. The Dewan promised to place the students' grievances before the Maharaja. Four days later the students presented a memorial to the Maharaja.

The legal opinion tendered to the Government was to the effect that the increased levy was unjustifiable.¹³ The fee levied was for

11. Its members were Messrs. N. Padmanabha Pillai, M. R. Madhava Warriar, P. Karunakara Menon and K. N. Janardanan Pillai.

12. Pitt's report on 3 September 1921.

13. Head Sirkar Vakil, Mr. Ananda Rao's letter dated 13 September 1921.

the school year and not for a month or a term; once a student joined an institution the agreement between the parties was complete and so the rate of the fee could not be changed without the consent of either party. The Government, already embarrassed, accepted this view of the Law Officer and postponed the levy to the beginning of the next academic year.

The first phase of the episode ended here.

The second phase of the agitation started with the drastic measure of rustication taken against Mr. T. N. Kunhiraman Nair and others by the authorities of the educational institutions in Trivandrum. The students again resorted to strike to get the dismissed students re-admitted. Evidently they were elated by the success already achieved.

Mr. Pitt, who had been at Alwaye watching the situation in South Malabar and Cochin State and taking steps to prevent the Moplah rebels retreating before the British troops into Travancore, was recalled to Trivandrum. Anticipating trouble, the Government adopted precautionary measures. Dispositions were made with a view to keep strong bodies of police ready at convenient centres.

An unfortunate tragedy was enacted on 21 September in the Maharaja's College compound at Trivandrum. On that day a combination of the police, the Body Guard and the cavalry made a charge on the students simultaneously from all sides.

Mr. Pitt had given instructions that no police force should be used anywhere in the town without a written requisition from the authorities of the Education Department. All motor transport, likely to be requisitioned by the police, had been sent out of the town by their owners who were afraid that they might be damaged if trouble arose. Mr. Pitt who rode on horse-back was stoned at the gate of St. Joseph's High School whereupon "I loosened the thong of a hunting whip I was carrying and made my horse plunge by digging him with my spurs and holding him with the reins. At the same time I cracked the whip and then swung the loose thong round the tail end of the boys as they retreated".¹⁴ Apparently none was injured. After this adventure Mr. Pitt went to the Vanchiyur High School wherefrom he proceeded to "see if the College was all right". He charged a crowd that had gathered in the premises of the Maharaja's College and after a subsequent interview with the Dewan, came back to the same scene.

14. Pitt's report 13 October 1921.

Meanwhile more people gathered in the College compound. Posse after posse of police, troops and cavalry were posted at strategic points. The Principal, Mr. Stephenson, requested Mr. Pitt to clear the compound. A detachment of the Body Guard arrived at the northern gate, a few headed by Mr. Pitt proceeding to the southern gate under heavy pressure. The police also joined them. The students and others were sitting on the grass in the shade of the jack tree in the lawn to the east of the Tennis Court when the troopers came in. The excited students were hemmed in. Stones were hurled at the police. The troopers "lost all self-control."¹⁵ In the stampede that followed the charge by the police and the Body Guard, none could describe what exactly happened. Rushing and running, beating by baton, bruised limbs, yelling and shouting alone can describe the scene.

The chase and assault might have continued only for ten minutes. Then the police and the cavalry retired though a detachment of the Nair Brigade continued at the scene till the evening.

This incident was condemned by every section of the press, inside and outside the State. The *Swarat* characterised it as the "Military invasion of the Royal College" and made trenchant criticism of the callousness of the authorities. A wave of protests and a chain of incidents followed the tragedy. A certain section of the vernacular press appeared to keep the agitation going.

On 27 February, 1922 Mr. Raghaviah, Dewan addressed¹⁶ the eighteenth session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly when he defended the Government's policy. If the Government were wrong in accepting the recommendation of an unrepresentative and non-responsible committee to enhance the fees, he said, the people could have convinced the Government through constitutional channels of their error instead of permitting the boys to champion their own cause in a militant manner, molesting the law-abiding citizens.¹⁷ No Government could allow such lawlessness" he added, "and the rioters had to be dispersed by force which in the present instance however was only employed by way of self-defence". Of course

15. District Magistrate, Narayanan Pandalai's letter to the Chief Secretary 22 December 1921.
16. Proceedings of the 18th session of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.
17. The Dewan's contention was that no rioter was seriously injured; the death of a boy, after a month was due to typhoid fever and not injuries sustained by him; even members of College staff, reported to have been injured, had abstained from giving evidence; the solitary complaint lodged by a student before the First Class Magistrate, Trivandrum, was thrown out on the ground that the assembly was an unlawful one.

the Government was not denying the possibility of individual excesses but they were certainly against the appointment of a committee of enquiry.¹⁸

The Members of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly presented a joint petition for the institution of a committee of enquiry. The barrage of interpellations by Members like Messers K. P. Raman Pillai, M. R. Madhava Warriar and T. Kumara Pillai only served to stiffen the Dewan's attitude. The feeling of the people were embittered and for several days there were instances of manhandling of policemen at convenient corners by unknown men.

It serves no purpose now to attempt to fix the responsibility for the unfortunate incidents or to apportion blame, because a complex situation defies a simple explanation. The essential goodness in human nature had expressed itself when Mr. Pitt who was stoned earlier and the students who were beaten black and blue finally parted as friends prior to the former's interview with the Dewan. But for Mr. Pitt's immediate presence in the College premises and his earlier adventures with the young boys the unhappy events might not have happened. It is quite possible that bad elements in society would have mixed themselves up with the students, with their connivance or otherwise, though we attempt at no generalisation. It was a case of the impetuosity of the youth and the disturbed emotional balance of the police clashing with each other. The District Magistrate, present at the scene, did not order the charge but was rather negotiating with the students.¹⁹ He stated that the reports regarding the bayoneting and lancing of the defenceless boys were totally false. A calm attitude and a cool head could have, with a touch of sympathy and imagination, easily won over the impressionable youth and weaned them from the undesirable elements. On the whole the College campus presented a scene of misdirected energy.

18. Several public meetings were held demanding the appointment of a committee of enquiry. On 23 September a meeting, held at the Trivandrum beach and presided over by Mr. A. Narayana Pillai, resolved to request the Government to appoint a committee of enquiry consisting of officials and a majority of elected non-officials. The citizen's conference on 28 September at Karamanai appealed to the Government to forgive the students, considering their age and inexperience. There were hundreds of similar resolutions coming from all parts of the State. Even a memorial submitted to the Maharaja on 8 November 1921, by the political leaders failed to evoke any sympathetic response.

19. See accounts, given by the following eye-witnesses:

Messrs. A. Narayana Pillai, N. Padmanabha Pillai, (High Court Vakils); M. N. Pillai, (Medical Practitioner); N. Raman Pillai, (Editor, of the *Conch*); K. G. Jacob, (Vakil); and K. Velu Pillai, (Editor, *Bharata Kesari*).

Many of those involved in the unhappy incidents were adolescents. Possibly they did not cherish deep political convictions or understand the full implications of responsible government. It might be that a few of the agitators were mere political opportunists who would have been satisfied with the fishes and loaves of office. Yet the students strike is not without any positive result. The stubborn attitude of the Dewan was an eye-opener to the political thinkers and workers of Travancore. If there had been a responsible Executive in the State, they felt, an impartial enquiry might have been conducted in deference to public opinion. Behind the rebellious students stood the disgruntled parents and guardians, many of them poor, watching the situation and worrying about the enhanced fees. They began to dream of an Executive, responsive to public opinion and responsible to popular representatives. In this sense, the year 1921 was a new turning-point in the political aspirations of the people of Travancore. It stood between two worlds. It awakened the sluggish mind from the torpor of feudalism and political slavery. The incidents of the year were fruitful in rallying public opinion, awakening political consciousness and urging the youth towards political action. They were the birth-pangs of a new political order. They revealed a discernible shift in political opinions irrespective of caste or creed, as increasingly expressed through the press, the platform and the Popular Assembly. Of course the students' strike was just an incident, unfortunate though it was, in the gradual process of evolution towards constitutionalism. Popular energy, though at the time canalised into the specific issue of fee enhancement, soon began to flow outward into new fields, over wider extensions.

CHAPTER 11

MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU IN MALABAR

It had been originally proposed to hold the second Kerala Provincial Conference at Tellicherry where, however, it could not be organised. The conference finally took place at Palghat on 6 May 1923 under the presidentship of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. It met at a critical time, for in the wake of the Moplah rebellion, there had unfortunately broken out Hindu-Muslim riots in the Punjab and internal division had appeared in the Congress ranks on the issue of Council entry. A responsible task faced the Congressmen who had to chalk out the future programme of political action in the light of the unhappy experiences of the past.

Mr. K. P. Gayatri Vallabha Iyer, Chairman of the Reception Committee, referred to the acute problem of tenant-landlord relationship in Malabar that had been responsible for a number of disorders in the past, including the unfortunate Moplah rebellion.¹

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, with her sweet voice, helped to soothe the ruffled nerves of the people of Malabar. She pointed out the fact that, having been indirectly responsible for the disorders in the Punjab, it was the duty of Malabar to send her the message of peace as well; she had therefore come to Malabar not to give but receive a message. Kerala, bred up in the tradition of religious and racial tolerance, should concentrate all the more on social unity. It was the duty of the sons of the soil, Moplahs and Hindus, to uproot the weed of mutual distrust, sow the seed of unity and reap the harvest of freedom.

The aged mother of Ali brothers, present at the conference, pointed out in an inspiring speech that the attainment of *swaraj*, India's birth-right, was impossible without Hindu-Muslim unity.

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1. According to Mr. Logan, said Mr. Iyer, several English judges had decided cases in favour of landlords and granted them rights, misinterpreting law and custom in Malabar. Both landlords and tenants had organised themselves and contested elections against each other. Leaders like Messrs. M. Krishnan Nair, Sadasiva Bhat, K. P. Raman Menon and Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, a powerful writer and landlord, had done much to create a proper atmosphere for a solution of the complex problem in all its details.

The Political Conference was supplemented by a Literary Conference under the presidentship of Mr. K. M. Panikkar, Editor of the *Swarajya* and also characterised by an inter-caste or cosmopolitan dinner in which Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari and Mr. Devadas Gandhi participated. The Literary Conference emphasised the importance of Malayalam language and literature while the inter-caste dinner certainly constituted a landmark in the movement for the abolition of untouchability in Malabar.

Several resolutions were passed at the conference, one of them calling upon the Hindu and the Muslim communities to develop mutual harmonious relationship. The Palghat Conference was the first to be held after the Moplah rebellion. It had a message of peace to convey, of communal amity.

It was about this time that the Flag Satyagraha was started at Nagpur where Mr. M. M. Govinda Kurup from Calicut, Mr. Ponnara G. Sridhar Mr. K. Kumar and others from Travancore served as volunteers. The Satyagraha was prompted by the promulgation of section 111 on 1 May 1923 to prevent a procession carrying the tricolour flag and going in the direction of the civil lines of the city. Volunteers from several provinces gathered at Nagpur in response to the call of the All-India Congress Committee. A new sense of national unity throbbed in every heart.

As is well known, there had been keen opposition at this time to Council entry, on the part of a section in the Congress. In Malabar too a split between the two wings was in evidence. At its meeting held on

2. The conference appreciated Gandhiji's service to the nation, condemned the violence that expressed itself during the period of the Moplah rebellion; congratulated the Khilafat Conference for having condemned the forced conversions; expressed sorrow at the untimely demise of Mr. K. V. Balakrishna Menon at the Cannanore jail and of Mr. Ramaswamy Iyer, Secretary of the Palghat District Congress and also at the wagon tragedy; appointed a committee of five members including Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Dr. Syed Mahmud and Mr. K. Madhavan Nair to enquire into the causes and incidents of the Moplah rebellion; demanded the abolition of untouchability; congratulated Kemal Pasha on his achievements in Turkey; supported the decision regarding the boycott of Legislature taken by the Congress at the Gaya session; and made certain idealistic suggestions for solving the landlord-tenant problem. The tenancy legislation effected subsequently owes much to the sincere efforts made by Messrs. P. Ramunni Menon, K. Madhavan Nair, K. P. Raman Menon, G. Sankaran Nair, Kunhirama Padiyar and M. M. Kunhirama Menon.
3. Mr. Sridhar was sentenced to six months' imprisonment but released after a month.

25 May 1923 at Bombay the All-India Congress Committee decided that in view of the existing political conditions the no-changers should not conduct any propaganda to popularise their views as against those of the Swarajist Party demanding Council entry. This decision was also endorsed by the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee that subsequently met at Trichur. Later at Delhi it was resolved to permit Congressmen to enter Legislature in case they desired to do so.

Mr. C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru had been in favour of Council entry while Gandhiji and Mr. C. Rajagopalachari were against it. There was a meeting of the local Congress Committee at Kottayam in Travancore under the presidentship of Mr. K. S. Bhattatiri. When a majority of those present expressed themselves against Council entry, Mr. A. K. Pillai who was a pro-changer resigned his Secretaryship of the Travancore District Congress Committee and Mr. Chittedath Sanku Pillai was elected as the new Secretary.

As regards the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon and U. Gopala Menon were pro-changers while Mr. K. Kelappan Nair was a no-changer. At the Kakinada session of the Congress, the leaders from Bengal supported Council entry on which a favourable resolution came to be passed. The Delhi resolution was thus ratified at Kakinada.

At the Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress in 1924 an agreement in difference was reached between the Swarajists and Gandhiji. The former agreed to the "spinning franchise" while Gandhiji agreed to their work in Council. Both Mr. A. K. Pillai and Mr. George Joseph parted company from the Gandhian camp. An uncompromising No-Changer, Mr. George Joseph now returned to the Bar after resigning his membership of the Indian National Congress. He was under the influence of Mr. C. Rajagopalachari.

CHAPTER 12

VAIKOM SATYAGRAHA

At the Congress session in Kakinada a resolution had been passed on the initiative of Mr. T. K. Madhavan to take proper steps for the eradication of untouchability in the country. Messrs. K. Kelappan Nair, T. K. Madhavan, V. Sankaran Nambudiripad and K. Velayudha Menon were specially authorised by the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee to tackle the problem in Kerala as an urgent issue. Mr. Kunju Panicker, a nominated member of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly in Travancore had already submitted a representation at its sixteenth session referring to the social evil of *theendal* or distance pollution and the necessity to eradicate it. The war against social disabilities and inequalities was being waged by the enlightened saint, Sri Narayana Guru Swamikal and leaders like Mr. N. Kumaran Asan and Mr. T. K. Madhavan.

Ever since the days of the Ezhava Memorial, the Ezhavas in Travancore had been striving hard for their social elevation. They constituted a large body in Shertallai Taluk where they organised the Ezhava Young Men's Service Union with fifteen branch unions in different villages. On 12 December 1919, nearly 5000 Ezhavas held a meeting at Kanichikulangara near Mararikulam under the Presidentship of Mr. C. V. Kunjuraman, then Editor of the *Kausthubham*. Their ultimate objective was to secure admission into the State temples and level up all differences in Hindu society.¹

In accordance with their programme already chalked out, Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon, A. K. Pillai, K. Kelappan Nair and Kurur Nilakantan Nampudiripad, undertook a propaganda tour in several places in Travancore. Everywhere they addressed public gatherings and were welcomed with enthusiasm. It was proposed to form an Anti-Untouchability Committee in every village for intensive propaganda at all levels and teach the Harijans the rudiments of

1. Letter from G. Velayudhan Pillai to C. B. Cunningham, Commissioner of Police, dated 19-12-1920; English Records, Trivandrum.

2. The party visited Quilon, Trivandrum, Nagercoil, Kottayam, Alleppey, Kayamkulam and Changanachery, apart from other places like Sasthamkotta, Balaramapuram, Mavelikara, Padmanabhapuram, Tiruvalla and Chengannur. During the propaganda tour, Mr. K. Kelappan Nair thought it would be better to drop his caste name 'Nair' permanently. Therefore hereafter we may refer to him as Mr. K. Kelappan.

education and healthy living. At a meeting held at the office of the *Swarat* at Quilon on 16 February, 1924 it was further resolved to work for temple entry for the Harijans and for their freedom of movement on all public roads.

In the course of their itinerary, the party on 28 February, 1924 reached Vaikom, a small village in Travancore clustered round a temple, set in the midst of four square walls along the outer sides of which run the temple roads used for processions and other ceremonies. The low castes could not use the temple roads and they were to stop even on the paths leading to them before they reached the pollution distance. According to reports the roads is question were open to non-Hindus and it was certainly an anomaly and a negation of civic liberty that the *avarnas* like Ezhavas were denied access to them.³ It was decided therefore that if the contemplated negotiations with the local *savarnas* and the Devaswom authorities should prove to be fruitless, a grant procession including *avarnas* should be taken along the roads on 30 March, 1924. The leaders realised that Satyagraha was the only possible course to be adopted for the removal of the gross social injustice.⁴

Thus was inaugurated the great Satyagraha that was to put Vaikom on the map of struggle for social liberty. Vaikom proclaimed the evil of unapproachability in Travancore to the rest of India. The news of the impending Satyagraha greatly stirred the people as it was a novel method of action so far not resorted to in South India.

The temple authorities and the *savarna* leaders remained stiff in their attitude. The local Congress Committee appealed to the Government of Travancore for necessary action but the latter apparently

3. The Ezhavas and the Pulavas could not approach the higher castes nearer than sixteen feet and seventy two feet respectively. In view of the possibility that the approach of the Pulayas might not be noticed by the higher castes, they had to proclaim their approach by loud shouts frequently made. It would appear that Mr. K. M. Panikkar had suggested to Mr. T. K. Madhavan that only through Satyagraha could public attention be concentrated on the problem of untouchability. While Mr. Madhavan was for a Satyagraha at Haripad Mr. Panikkar suggested that it might be conducted at Vaikom and converted the former to his view-point. (Mr. K. M. Panikkar's *Atma-Katha*, pages 96-97)
4. There was a view that on account of the failure of the no-tax agitation in Tanjavur the Congress leaders in the South, who were anxious to "ginger" the community, resolved to achieve better results through the slogan of untouchability and they fortunately found a proper atmosphere at Vaikom. (*Madras Mail*, 30 June 1924)

stuck to the view that an infringement of custom would lead to bloodshed. It could therefore be expected that the Government would only maintain the *status quo* by resorting to force, if necessary.

Several organisations in Kerala lent support to the Satyagraha campaign⁹ and conducted intensive propaganda to awaken the *savarnas*. The Congress opened a camp for volunteers at Vaikom where young men flocked in large numbers, actively inspired by ardent workers like Mr. K. G. Gopalakrishnan and Mr. T. K. Madhavan. Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon, Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and other leaders arrived at Vaikom three days before date fixed for the procession¹⁰.

The Devaswom authorities and the Government had put up barricades on the roads leading to the temple and prohibitory orders had been served on the leaders by the District Magistrate. Yet on 30 March 1921, an enthusiastic band of volunteers led by Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon marched from the camp towards the temple precincts. When they approached the barricades, a large contingent of police under the District Superintendent and the Commissioner stopped them. As Mr. Menon advanced further, in the company of Mr. T. K. Madhavan and a volunteer, they were all arrested, tried on the same day, sentenced to imprisonment for six months and sent to the Central Jail, Trivandrum. Next morning, Messrs A. K. Pillai, K. Kelappan and K. Velayudha Menon were arrested and taken to Kottayam for having defied the ban of the District Magistrate. Sentenced to four months' imprisonment each, they too were sent to the Central Jail, Trivandrum.

The Satyagraha, says Mr. Mahadev Desai, "was a fierce struggle. But the fierceness was all on the side of the orthodox forces which tried to resist the attempt to break the wall of prejudice and to open the road to the reform. The immediate objective was indeed very limited—no temple entry, but only the opening of all the roads round the temple which were also open to other non-Hindus."¹¹

Organisations like the Kerala Hindu Sabha, the Nair Service Society and the Kshatriya Maha Sabha favoured the Satyagraha. The Nair Samajams did a remarkable job in propagating the objectives of the Satyagraha. It was a matter of happy surprise that the Yogakshema Sabha, the leading organisation of the Nambuthiris, passed resolutions, at their annual conferences, in favour of the opening of temples to the *avarnas*. (*The Epic of Travancore*, page 11)

The leaders who arrived at Vaikom included Messrs. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai, Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai, M. N. Nair, C. V. Kunjuraman and Alummootil Channar.

The Epic of Travancore, page 11-12.

Gandhiji carefully watched and "nursed" the Satyagraha at every stage. He appreciated the courtesy extended by the Government of Travancore to the Satyagrahis in spite of their unbending attitude to the problem of temple entry. He advised the volunteers to gather public opinion in their favour in the State by petitions, deputations and meetings. While in British India the non-co-operation movement was intended to end or mend the whole system of Government, in Travancore the Satyagrahis were fighting against "sacerdotal prejudice" rather than a whole system; petitioning therefore was no sign of weakness on the part of a Satyagrahi so far as direct action does not always "preclude other consistent methods." Gandhiji was against sending aid from outside to the Satyagrahis in Travancore, for, as he saw it, the Satyagraha at Vaikom was being offered by a few idealists who were capable of sacrificing their all. Gandhiji was firmly of the view that the "sacrifice of helpers from other parts of India will not convert the opponents and it is highly likely that the last state of the 'Untouchables' will be worse than the first."⁸ No monetary support from outside was necessary for the campaign from within, as public Satyagraha is only "an extension of private or domestic Satyagraha"⁹ and the Satyagrahis should rely on the law of suffering to melt the heart. Stern in discipline and gentle in their dealings with the orthodox section, the Satyagrahis might be subjected to local boycott and debarred from family privileges and the enjoyment of family property but they should not go to law for redeeming a personal wrong. They must believe that God helps the helpless and tries His votaries, but never beyond endurance. Satyagraha is not limited by time or capacity for suffering and "there is no such thing as defeat in Satyagraha".¹¹ It is an argument of suffering which the volunteers would have to undergo cheerfully.

The news of the Satyagraha and the consequent arrests spread like wild fire and there was a large influx of volunteers from every part of the country. The All-India Congress Committee gave a donation of Rs 1000 a month and several persons and organisations extended generous assistance. Leaders like Mr. Vijayaraghavachariar of Salem issued public statements against the continuance of untouchability. Petitions were sent to the Maharaja of Travancore praying for the abolition of that evil custom.

The police continued to prohibit the crossing of the boundary, marking the prohibited area, by non-caste volunteers accompanied

8. *Young India* 24 April 1924.

9. *Young India* dated 24 April 1924.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Young India* dated 19 February 1925.

by their Congress supporters. Every day the Ezhavas and Pulayas submitted themselves to arrest as they approached the pollution distance. Though the *savarna* families immediately around the temple did not extend any effective co-operation, Hindus in the neighbouring areas actively helped the satyagrahis. Messrs. Madhavan Pillai, (Vakil); K. G. Gopalakrishnan, S. K. Narayanan Nair, Krishnan Vaidyar of Panavalli and Dr. Kesavan Pillai strained every nerve to make the Satyagraha successful.

As the prisons became full with the convicted volunteers, the authorities were much embarrassed and they began to change their policy. They set up barriers to prevent the Satyagrahis from approaching the forbidden precincts.

Meanwhile, on the arrest of Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon, Mr. George Joseph had been invited to assume the leadership of the Satyagraha movement. Gandhiji wrote to Mr. George Joseph on 6 April, 1924 that the latter should let the Hindus do the job and not offer Satyagraha himself so far as the Nagpur resolution of the Congress had called on the Hindus to wipe out untouchability; the silent suffering of a Hindu would be more effective than that of thousands of non-Hindus¹². However before the letter reached him Mr. George Joseph had already joined the Satyagraha. He pointed out to the Government of Travancore that they were not "playing the game", as they discontinued the arrests and erected barricades on the roads.

A suggestion was now made to organise hunger strike on the part of the volunteers as well as to break or scale the barricades put up by the authorities. It was however nipped in the bud by Gandhiji who was of the view that the breaking or the scaling of the fences "will not be civil disobedience. It will be essentially uncivil and criminal". He advised the volunteers through Mr. George Joseph to omit "fasting but stand or squat in relays with quiet submission till arrested".¹³ One should not fast against a tyrant for that would be "a species of violence done to him"; fasting was to be resorted to only against "a lover, not to extort rights but to

12. *Young India* dated 1 May, 1924. Mr. K. M. Panikkar in his *Atma Katha* says that his view that only Hindus should participate in the Satyagraha was approved by Gandhiji though the Kerala Congress Committee was highly critical of his suggestion at that time. A deputation of the Kerala Congress consisting of Mr. Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad and Mr. K. Madhavan Nair met Gandhiji in this connection at Ahmedabad where Mr. Panikkar also was present. Gandhiji however continued to support Mr. Panikkar's view-point.

13. *Young India* dated 1 May, 1924.

reform him....."¹⁴ Fasting might be justifiable at Vaikom only when the local supporters would go back on their promise to suffer. Satyagraha in an Indian State for the attainment of the political objective of the Congress was of course forbidden but that at Vaikom was in connection with local abuses of a social character. Untouchability and unapproachability, though general issues, had to be tackled at any suitable place or time and the Satyagraha at Vaikom, stated Gandhiji, deserved full public sympathy as far as it was conducted with the strictest regard to non-violence and truth.

On 29 April 1924 a party of twelve Akalis headed by Mr. Lala Lal Singh and Mr. Kripal Singh arrived in Madras from Amritsar on their way to Vaikom.¹⁵ The Akalis set up a free feeding house at Vaikom for the volunteers in which hundreds were fed every day. Early in June however they closed their kitchen, in obedience to instructions from the Siromani Gurudwara Prabandhik Committee and the Satyagraha Committee opened their own.

The Satyagraha assumed all-India importance. Eminent leaders like Swami Sradhdhananda and Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar visited Vaikom and gave generous help to the Satyagrahis. A band of volunteers under Mr. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker went from Madurai to Vaikom but he was imprisoned¹⁶ for having violated the prohibitory

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14. *Ibid.* Gandhiji stated that his fast at Bombay and Bardoli was to reform those who loved him. "But I will not fast to reform, say, General Dyer, who not only does not love me but who regards himself as my enemy". (Gandhiji's letter to George Joseph). The fast at Bardoli was against fellow-men who ignited the Chauri Chaura spark, for the sake of reforming them. If the Satyagrahis at Vaikom were to fast only because the authorities would not arrest them, it would be a beggar's fast rather than anything else. A Satyagrahi should not be concerned about the effect of his action so much as its propriety and he must have faith in his cause and his means.
 15. It was reported that they were representatives of those Sikh "fanatics" who had already created trouble at Nabha and in the Punjab. (The *Madras Mail*, dated 30 June 1924). They were received at the Madras Central Station by Mr. T. Prakasam and Mr. V. S. Venkataraman and entertained at the *Swarajya* office. They were wearing "green long coats with yellow waist band and cross band and black turbans". (File No. 513 dated 1 August 1925).
 16. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari was satisfied, on the whole, with the treatment of the prisoners by the Government of Travancore. But unfortunately their treatment of Mr. Naicker was quite unsatisfactory. He was treated as an ordinary convict in the Central Jail, Trivandrum, compelled to wear jail clothes and ankle iron and confined in a solitary cell, away from the other Satyagraha prisoners. Of course Mr. Naicker who had spurned wealth and position was in excellent spirits. Mr. Rajagopalachari wondered whether

order, along with Messrs. George Joseph, T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer and K. Nilakantan Nambudiripad.

Though they refrained from the arrest of the Satyagrahis, the Government continued to prevent them from crossing the barricades put up by them. On one occasion Mr. T. V. Chathukutty Nair, who led a batch of volunteers refused to return to the camp even after nightfall. In spite of the importunities of the volunteers as well as the police, he remained on the road without taking a particle of food in the hot sun and throughout the night continuously for two days. On the third day he fell down unconscious whereupon he was removed to the camp on medical advice. This incident naturally evoked a great amount of enthusiasm and brought in more support for the movement.

Meanwhile there were certain allegations in the press about acts of violence and oppression at Vaikom. According to the District Magistrate, Kottayam, the Congress volunteers were singing songs in ridicule of the Government as well as the caste Hindus and spinning yarn on their *Charkas* at the pickets on one of the roads near the temple. The police therefore removed the *charkas* and charge-sheeted nearly forty volunteers before the local Magistrate who fined them; there was no incident at all on the other three roads where there was no spinning on *Charkas*.¹⁷ It was reported that though the volunteers were trained in non-violence and did not resort to force themselves, yet their speeches and songs were such as to notice others to disturb the peace and that they were also obstructing caste Hindus, going to the temple. There was a suspicion that the *savarna* Hindus who were contemplating an anti-satyagraha campaign stood behind the lawless acts of rowdy elements prejudicial to the volunteers. The Satyagrahis were advised by Gandhiji¹⁸ to keep themselves cool under every provocation and thus remain, as Caesar's wife, above suspicion.

the Government was really aware of the high status in society enjoyed by Mr. Naicker. His conviction itself was illegal for there had been no incitement on his part to violence.

17. *The Madras Mail*, 11 July 1924.

18. *Young India* dated 3 July 1924. It was reported that when a procession was conducted on the eastern side of the temple, a person, Mr. Sivasailam, was assaulted. On 29 June another volunteer, Martandan, was attacked by the rowdies. Mr. Narayanan, Captain in charge of the Ashram, did not wish to complain to the authorities about such acts of lawlessness. The correspondent of the *Madras Mail* reported on 11 July, 1924 that the *savarnas* had no hand in such persecution. Gandhiji wondered whether the authorities were conniving at such violence to which the Satyagrahis were being exposed. The rowdies were reported to have blinded the eyes of the volunteers by throwing lime into them.

On 7 July, 1924 there was a meeting of the caste Hindus of Central Travancore at Chengannur over which Mr. M. R. Madhava Warriar, Member of the Legislative Council, Travancore, presided. They resolved, without opposition, that the non-caste Hindus should be accorded entry into the temple roads at Vaikom.¹⁹ On 16 July a similar meeting of the orthodox section of caste Hindus was held at Vaikom²⁰ to find out the ways and means of remedying the disadvantages resulting from the Satyagraha campaign. It appeared therefore that at that time the conservatives were sticking to their guns with pitiable stubbornness. They did not seem to realise that their attempt to stem the tide of social progress would be of no avail.

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19. *Trivandrum Daily News* dated 7 July, 1924. The meeting was held in the spacious building of Muthadeth Vanjipuzha Pandarathil, a prominent landlord of Chengannur and attended by several prominent Nairs and Malayala Brahmins including Thazhaman Tantri, Mithramadathil Devan Krishnan, Chengazham C. P. Bhattatiri, Muthetathumadathil Pandarathil, Adimattathu Tantri, C. P. Krishna Pillai, Kuzhivelil Krishna Pillai, Muttathu Govinda Pillai, Kalloor Narayana Pillai, V. K. Govindan Nair, C. S. Warriar, P. K. Paramu Pillai and other gentlemen. Mr. Attukal Nilakanta Pillai moved the resolution which was seconded by Mr. C. P. Bhattatiri. A second resolution moved by Mr. Kalloor Narayana Pillai was passed, demanding entry for the low castes into the roads surrounding the outer walls of all the temples in Travancore. They were as a matter of fact already enjoying access to such roads at Chengannur, Tiruvalla, Arannula and Korattivil. The second resolution had been supported by Mr. Krishnan Pandarathil, one of the five major *uralars* of the Chengannur Temple. In another resolution Mr. M. N. Nair, a famous orator, protested against the excesses committed by the police and certain misguided caste Hindus on the Satyagrahis at Vaikom. This resolution, supported by Mr. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai also was passed. The resolutions were forwarded to the Maharaja of Travancore.
20. It was held at the *Vadayat Samuham Mathom*. The conveners, eighteen in number, included Messrs. P. Vasudevan Devan Nambiatiri, I. Devan Vasudevan Nambiatiri, K. Govinda Pillai, Olezha Narayana Pillai, T. V. Sankaranarayana Iyer and M. K. Raman Pillai among others. Mr. V. K. Madhavan Kartha presided over the meeting. The issue of access to the temple roads was considered as the thin end of the wedge of a demand for entry into the temples themselves. Mr. O. Narayana Pillai moved a resolution to the effect that caste Hindus should boycott the Congressmen associated with the Satyagraha at Vaikom; they should neither engage their services, if vakils or teachers, nor vote for them at any of the elections so that the future generation might be saved from their ideas of social or religious revolution. The resolution, seconded by Vatakkumkur Valia Raja, was passed. In the second resolution, the conveners decided to start a

Whatever might be the genesis of the Satyagraha, the members of the Ezhava community had been playing an important role in the movement supplying men and money for its success. It was on the initiative of one of the members of the community that certain Congressmen organised, in February, 1924 the *Aithochadana* (anti-Untouchability) Committee and published its avowed objectives. It was given out that Sri Narayana Guru Swamikal had blessed the campaign at Vaikom. His *Ashram* at Vaikom was being utilised at the Satyagraha camp. It was published in a newspaper that he was collecting subscriptions in his Sivagiri *Ashram* for the cause of Satyagraha. Subsequently the news was published in the *Desabhimani*, a Malayalam newspaper, that he openly incited his disciples to rebellion and unlawful action; he was reported to

newspaper in Malayalam under the name *Dharmasthapanam* to propagate the religious views and ideals of the orthodox Hindus. In the third resolution they expressed their regret that the Government had issued a mandate to stop the *savarna* Satyagraha intended to preserve the time-honoured religious beliefs and practices whereas they had taken no notice of the speeches or acts of Congressmen. (The counter-Satyagraha by caste Hindus had been started on the western road, Vaikom, but it was ineffective.) In the fourth resolution the organisers congratulated Mr. Indanthuruthi Nambiatiri who had withdrawn himself from the *savarna* meeting at Chengannur and held another meeting at Thazhaman *Illom* at which he got passed some resolutions against the Satyagraha at Vaikom. In the fifth resolution they warned all *savarna* Hindus against the temptations offered by Congressmen as well as some members of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam*. At the meeting, Mr. K. T. Bhanu Pandarathil was visibly moved and tears trickled from his eyes, as he was condemning the Satyagrahi attack on the hoary religious customs. (The *Hindu*, dated 17 July 1924).

It may be noted that according to a decision taken at a meeting of the Nambudiris of Pudukad in the Cochin State and adjoining areas Mr. K. K. Krishnan Nambudiripad and Mr. P. Ashtamurthi Nambudiripad who had participated in the Satyagraha were prevented from mingling with other Nambudiris unless they would perform *prayaschitta*. This interdiction was applicable to the other members of their families if they would perform religious rites along with the two gentlemen. His mother and sisters refused to disown Mr. Krishnan Nambudiripad whereupon the *Karanavar* was obliged to leave the family house. The entire family therefore was subjected to social ostracism. But on the day of *Nadaturakal* ceremony during *Kalasam* at the Peruvanam temple, Mr. Krishnan Nambudiripad and his brothers freely entered the temple premises and sat at meal along with those Nambudiris who had excommunicated them. There was a similar incident at Pidikke Paramba Temple as well. The Nambudiris in general could not answer all the issues raised by Mr. Krishnan Nambudiripad as he tried to reason with them. (The *Hindu* dated 22 August 1924).

have disapproved of the methods of Satyagraha adopted at Vaikom and to have suggested that the volunteers should advance along the prohibited roads, scale the barricades and sit with others to dine in the temple.²¹ Gandhiji felt that one who could scale the barricades might as well break open the temple doors and pierce through the lines of policemen. Such a rash act would be the reverse of Satyagraha and would not successfully convert the orthodox to the reformist view. Any surrender to violence would amount to a lack of faith in one's means. The Bardoli Satyagraha had been suspended because Congress and Khilafat men were implicated in the Chauri Chaura outrage; if the Congressmen at Vaikom were to resort to violence "there would be a case for penance and therefore suspension but not otherwise".²²

21. *Justice*, dated 29 August, 1924. It was reported that Sri Narayana Guru Swamikal was approached by many of his devotees for clarification. The *Western Star of Travancore* sent its representative also to interview Swamiji. Swamiji was reported to have informed the representative that the *Ashram* at Vaikom was placed at the disposal of the Satyagrahis by the Secretary of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* and some others, "without his knowledge or will or consent", that he had openly and expressly dissociated himself from the *Yogam* and resumed the direct management of his *estates* because its leading members were not amenable to his ways of thinking and advice; that he had not collected any subscription at Sivagiri for the Satyagraha campaign and that he had never talked to Mr. Kesavan, of the *Desabhimani*, about the need for forcibly entering the temple at Vaikom. Therefore the report that appeared in the *Desabhimani* regarding a forced entry into the temple was unwarranted. Swamiji was reported to have stated further that the method of action adopted at Vaikom was not true Satyagraha but open unmixed civil disobedience. Swamiji would rather advocate loyalty and obedience to constituted authority and law in letter and spirit. No Ezhava should violate the Government's prohibition regarding the use of certain roads. Swamiji's concept of Satyagraha was in form different from that of Gandhiji for, as he was reported to have stated, it was real *tapas* and purification of mind and body that would generate a magnetic force capable of making the *savarnas* give up their exclusive rights and privileges. When Mr. C. Rajagopalachari had requested him at Sivagiri to ask every Ezhava to help the Satyagraha, he replied that the object of the Satyagraha could not be attained even after a generation so far as social elevation, to be preceded by worth and desert, must come from within and "cannot be forced up from without".

22. *Young India* dated 19 June, 1924.

The struggle between reaction and progress²³ continued. There was a proposal to start similar Satyagraha at other centres also. But Mr. C. Rajagopalachari was against extending the front and thereby embarrassing the Government. He said, a "patched up compromise may do in politics but not in the field of untouchability. We can win only by successful education stimulated by Satyagraha and that is served well enough by concentration on Vaikom."

Meanwhile the sad demise occurred of Sri Mulam Tirunal Maharaja of Travancore on 7 August 1924. Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai became Regent. She ordered the release of all Satyagrahis from jail. Gandhiji now advised the leaders to contact the Maharani and the Dewan and submit a petition favouring reforms, to be signed by orthodox Hindus. Gandhiji congratulated the Maharani Regent and stated:

"It is a pretty custom for the State to release a certain number of prisoners on a new head occupying the gadi. What can be more natural than that these prisoners who have no criminal taint in them should be released?.....It has been stated that the late Maharaja, though most enlightened in many matters held very orthodox views on untouchability. Let me hope that Her Highness the Maharani Regent will recognise that untouchability is no credit to Hinduism but it is a serious blot on it. The best service that a Hindu State can render to Hinduism is to rid it of the curse and set an example in liberalism to Hindus of British India. The Satyagrahis will, I doubt not, make the way of the authorities smooth by continuing their self-restraint and making it clear that they do not want anything more than a recognition of the most elementary human right for the unapproachables and untouchables."

The caste Hindus decided, as Gandhiji advised, to go on a *jatha*, to meet and present a memorial to the Maharani Regent with the primary object of educating the people and eliciting, on the way, public sympathy for the cause of the untouchables. Several batches of caste Hindus arrived at Vaikom from neighbouring areas like

23. When Srimati Easwari Ammal, wife of Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, Secretary, Satyagraha Ashram, went to the temple at Vaikom through the northern gate for worship along with Mr. M. G. Kumari Pillai, one of the Satyagrahis, they were obstructed by the temple servants on the ground that khadi-wearing people who had dined in the company of untouchables could not be admitted into the temple. The lady returned disappointed but Mr. Kumari Pillai was dragged along the ground and pushed outside the premises by the temple servants with the help of some urchins and two police constables.

Parur, Alangad, Arukutty, Moovattupuzha and Shertallai.²⁴ The entire village of Vaikom was *en fete* on 31 October, 1924. Next day, very early in the morning, a *jatha* of nearly one hundred caste Hindus was formed at the *Ashram* under the supreme command of Mr. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai.²⁵ The volunteers arranged themselves in line on the foreshore and then advanced in pouring rain along the western road. The members of the *Ashram* suspended Satyagraha for the day in honour of the *jatha* and proposed to do the same thing also on the day on which the memorial would be presented to the Maharani Regent. All along the route from Vaikom to Trivandrum, the *jatha* received²⁶ a warm welcome at nearly two hundred places. As the *jatha* reached Trivandrum its number swelled to almost one thousand.

At the time the *jatha* from Vaikom was organised, a similar one was formed also at Suchindram in South Travancore under the leadership of Dr. M. Emperumal Naidu. Ever since the first of November, Messrs. M. Sivathanu Pillai, A. P. Nair and Dr. Naidu had been touring throughout the southern Taluks, enlisting members for the *jatha* and securing signatures for a memorial. By 7 November, about eighty caste Hindus including Brahmins, Vellalas and Nairs enlisted themselves as volunteers in the *jatha* which marched in military order from Kottar to Trivandrum. The *jatha* from Vaikom was thus joined at Trivandrum by that from Kottar.

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24. They were warmly received by the local leaders including Dr. P. C. Kesava Pillai, Mr. C. S. Madhavan Pillai, Mr. A. K. Pillai and Mr. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai, Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon, T. K. Madhavan, Swamy Satyavrathan and other workers were at Vaikom in time for the formation of the *jatha*.
 25. Mr. S. Padmanabha Menon of Alleppey was Commander of a Division while Messrs. S. K. Narayana Pillai and S. Balakrishna Pillai were Lieutenants. They all had distinctive head dresses while the ordinary members had their stars. The *Jatha* carried, at its head, a flag with its motto inscribed on it. The inclement weather dampened neither the enthusiasm of the volunteers nor the warmth of the reception accorded to them at all places on the way.
 26. At Kaduthuruthy Mr. T. Narayana Pillai, a Member of the Assembly, received them. The Ladies of Mayyanad extended a hearty welcome to them and held a public meeting under the presidentship of Smt. N. Meenakshi Amma, niece of Mr. C. V. Kunjuraman. A number of Pulayas who were present sang a ballad of welcome and offered a humble gift of beaten rice and copper coins, the only ones which custom enjoined them to use. It was the turn of Paravur to welcome the *Jatha* next. Sivagiri Mutt wore a festive appearance when the *jatha* arrived at Varkala and on the arch put up at the entrance were written the words, 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for man'.

A deputation consisting of twelve members²⁷ waited upon the Maharani Regent on the morning of 13 November at the Sethalmond Palace. Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai, the leader, submitted the following memorial:²⁸

May it please your Gracious Highness! We..... beg leave to approach Your Gracious Highness with the humble prayer that the roads round the Vaikom Temple and all other roads similarly situated in other parts of the State may be thrown open to all classes of Your Gracious Highness' humble servants without distinction of caste or creed. We are grateful.....for the kind and benevolent policy of removing the disabilities of the *avarna* Hindus in the matter of using public roads, courts, schools and other public institutions declared and followed for over fifty years. So long ago as in 1865 the Government published that all public roads in the State are open to all classes of people alike and in July 1884 the Government, by a fresh notification, reaffirmed the policy laid down in the previous order and enjoined that any violation of these orders will be visited with the severest displeasure of the Government. Though sixty years have elapsed since those orders were passed it is painful to find that even today certain public roads are closed to *avarna* Hindus and that the officers of the Government far from protecting the rights of these people in regard to this matter are taking steps to support those who infringe the notifications of the Government. The notification of 1884 came up for interpretation before the High Court more than 35 years ago and the High Court then considered it expedient to draw a distinction between the King's highways and *gramaveethis* and decided that the public roads mentioned in the notification of the Government were intended to mean only the King's highways and not *gramaveethis* which all roads were presumed to be. We..... submit that the notification of the Government made no such distinction or reservation probably; but for this strained interpretation put upon the notification by the High Court the problem with which the Government are now confronted would not have arisen. Even if the courts were justified in making

27. They were Messrs. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai, M. L. C., V. V. Narayanan Nambudiri, Samudayathil Kesava Kurup, Prakulam Parameswaran Pillai, Kallor Narayana Pillai, Mannath Padmanabha Pillai, Sivathanu Pillai, N. Ramakrishna Pillai, M. L. C., S. Krishna Warriar, A. K. Pillai, Dr. Padmanabha Pillai and Dr. M. E. Naidu.

28. Signed by more than 25,000 caste Hindus, and bound in silk, the memorial contained inscription in gold.

such a distinction in view of the peculiar conditions prevailing thenthese conditions have long since changed and there is no justification for maintaining or recognising any such distinction now. We also humbly bring to Your Gracious Highness' kind notice that recently a resolution was passed in the Madras Legislative Council recommending to the Government that all castes and communities be permitted to use all kinds of roads, *gramaveethis* and public wells and that the Madras Government have accepted the resolution and are giving due effect to it. It is a source of sincere sorrow to us, the *savarna* Hindus, that the denial of this right to the very large portion of the Hindu population of the State consisting of 17 lakhs out of a total of twenty lakhs of Hindus is sought to be justified on the ground that the *savarna* Hindus are opposed to the exercise of such rights by the *avaras*. This *jatha* has therefore been organised for the purpose of submitting.....this humble memorial to prove.....that there is no such opposition on the part of the *savarna* Hindus and that they are ready and willing to co-operate with the Government in removing the disabilities of their *avarna* Hindu brethren. We feel sorry that Travancore which.....stands today in the forefront of Indian States in education, enlightenment and all-round progress should in any way impair its reputation by the exclusion of the large majority of its Hindu population from the elementary right of citizenship which all other people of whatever nationality and religion are permitted to enjoy in this State. We therefore.....pray that Your Gracious Highness may be pleased to command that all roads and public institutions without reservation be thrown open to all classes of.....subjects without distinction of caste or creed. In this connection we are gratefully reminded of the generous solicitude Your Gracious Highness has already evinced in the cause of the amelioration of the condition of the depressed classes by the gracious act of releasing the Satyagrahi prisoners.....and we feel confident that the same spirit of charity, generosity and benevolence, will continue to mark Your Gracious Highness' action in regard to this all important subject

The Maharani Regent replied:

"It is not possible to give a reply at once in this all important matter. A resolution has come up for discussion in the Legislative Council and will be taken up in the next meeting of the Council. When final orders are passed the representation contained in the memorial will receive due consideration".

It was indeed gracious of the Maharani Regent to have directly received the members of the deputation rather than to have directed

them to meet the Dewan, the acknowledged channel through which all public matters should reach the sovereign. The memorial was marked by sobriety of thought and moderation of language and its specific object was to get the temple roads at Vaikom opened to the *avaras*. The assumption of the memorialists that the roads in dispute were public roads rather than temple roads was open to challenge; they could have recognised them, it was felt, as temple roads and then pressed for the remedy of their grievance concerning them, for it was galling to the self-respect and self-consciousness of a Hindu that access to a road used by the followers of other religions was denied to a section of his own community. But they missed this aspect of the issue somehow. The Maharani Regent's frank reply was the only one that could be given under the circumstances. The deputation next met the Dewan also.

On the same day a public meeting was held on the Shankumukham beach, Trivandrum, with Mr. V. Achutha Menon^{28a} in the chair,²⁹ and a resolution passed requesting that the prohibited roads at Vaikom should be thrown open to all. At a public meeting again held on the *maidan* to the east of the public offices two resolutions were passed. Every elected member of the Legislature was called upon to support the Vaikom Roads Resolution, already moved in the Legislative Council; the Government also was requested to hold an early session of the Legislative Council.

Mr. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai received numerous congratulatory messages from far and near. The *jatha* that he led was dispersed on 13 November. Its success owed much to the indefatigable efforts of Mr. A. K. Pillai as well as the organisational ability evinced by Mr. T. K. Madhavan.

The famous *Ashtami* festival was celebrated at the Vaikom Temple on 21 November 1924, the Satyagrahis continuing their picketing at the four barricades. Ugly developments were averted on

28a. Born in the Cochin State, he was an ardent nationalist who did a lot for Prohibition work and khadi work. He inculcated the spirit of nationalism in the people of Travancore through a number of public meetings and conferences that he arranged. He sacrificed his legal profession to a great extent for political work and taught self-respect and self-reliance.

29. It was attended by more than twenty thousand people including Diwan Bahadur A. Govinda Pillai, retired Judge of the High Court, Mr. A. Thanu Pillai and Mr. A. Narayana Pillai.

account of the tactful handling of the situation by Mr. W. H. Pitt, Commissioner of Police.³⁰

Mr. C. F. Andrews arrived at the Satyagraha camp at Vaikom early in January, 1925, having touched Kunnankulam on the way.³¹

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30. Nearly fifty thousand Hindu pilgrims had gathered for the festival at Vaikom. They were addressed at a public meeting by Swamy Satyavrathan and Mr. S. Sankaran Nambudiripad who spoke on the disabilities of the depressed classes. The image of the deity was taken in procession from Udayanapuram to Vaikom along the northern road. The *savarna* leaders wanted the removal of the Satyagrahis from the pickets before the passing of the procession. The police had removed the wooden barricade to provide free passage for the crowds, though the volunteers remained at their usual places, on the right side of the road. One of them was Thevan, a Pulaya, who had already had a term in the Central Jail as a Satyagrahi prisoner. Four or five reactionaries persuaded about twenty-five Nairs and Brahmins to obstruct the procession but nothing untoward happened on account of the precautions taken by the police. The procession passed along the road in spite of the presence of some untouchables among the Satyagrahis. A purification ceremony was conducted within the temple premises later. A similar situation might have developed the next day in regard to a procession along the southern road but the programme was so arranged that the procession was conducted at night when the Satyagrahis had retired from their pickets. (*New India*, 22 November, 1924.)
31. Mr. Andrews had desired to visit Vaikom as early as May, 1924 but could not do so then. His tour in January, 1925 covered Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, devastated by floods. He was accompanied by Mr. K. Kelappan and Mr. V. A. Sundaram when he visited Kunnankulam where, at a meeting presided over by Poet Vallathol, he laid the foundation stone of the Seva Mandir of Y. W. C. C. At Vaikom, he saw the Satyagrahis at their different stations watching the entrances through the four main roads around the temple. At each post a volunteer was spinning on a *charka* while two others were standing on guard waiting for permission to go forward. The police stood opposite to them to prevent further progress. There was thus a deadlock that had been going on for more than ten months. One batch of volunteers would be at the post of duty until mid-day when they would be relieved by another batch who would continue the Satyagraha until 6 p. m. During the monsoon, the volunteers had to stand in breast-deep waters for hours together as the police guarded the entrance in boats moored to the neighbouring houses. The local people were greatly impressed by the wonderful forbearance, patience and gentleness of the volunteers. A religious atmosphere prevailed at the *Ashram* where everything was in order. A religious service was being held every morning and evening for the benefit of the volunteers. Mr. Andrews felt certain that the band of Satyagrahis at Vaikom, with joy in their faces, would carry the cause of idealism to victory.

He seemed to be favourably impressed with the life and work of the Satyagrahi volunteers and exhorted them to continue their efforts until the realization of their objective. He observed that the barricades which at one time had been further away were brought nearer the temple. This certainly implied a partial victory for the Satyagrahis who were bound to succeed in their efforts in course of time.³²

During the twenty-first session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly,³³ Dewan Bahadur T. Raghaviah, the Dewan, referred, on 9th March 1925, to the resolution moved in the Legislative Council recommending the opening of the roads around and in the vicinity of the Vaikom Temple to all classes. It was understandable that the Ezhavas who had made rapid advance in education and material prosperity should particularly feel the prohibition to be derogatory to their self-respect. The aim of the Satyagraha, said the Dewan, was "to force the hands of the Government to authorise, by an executive order, the violation of an established custom which has received the recognition of the Travancore High Court in a series of decisions and which is therefore the present law of the land". Though the Government would not justify the existence of a custom, they had yet to reckon with it so long as it was based on popular religious belief and was not unknown in other parts of India.³⁴ It was not for the Government to interfere with usages or religious beliefs as far as they were not outrageously inhuman. The roads in question at Vaikom constituted temple property and there was no public institution nearby necessitating the entry of the different classes of people into them. The Government was willing to open new roads for the use of the entire public on the outskirts

They wasted not a moment but engaged their leisure in carding cotton, spinning yarn or weaving cloth. The conduct of the police was as much impressive as that of the Satyagrahis. During his stay at Vaikom, said Mr. Andrews, a lecture was arranged at 10 a. m. and for the benefit of the volunteers, the passive resistance at the barricades was suspended for two hours. Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, in charge of the *Ashram*, informed the police also to that effect so that they could, on their part, enjoy freedom from their onerous duty. This act of courtesy was illustrative of the condition under which the Satyagraha was being conducted. Except for the hardened extremists, the local people were, in general, for the opening of the roads. The Satyagraha at Vaikom was a test case and so it could not be abandoned to satisfy the genuine but reactionary sentiments of a few.

32. Report of the representative of the *Hindu* who interviewed him after his tour on the west coast.
33. The proceedings of the S. M. P. Assembly, twenty-first session.
34. An attempt to violate such custom in Salem District had led to a riot and in Malabar, to the disturbance of public peace. In upper India also similar customs were widely prevalent.

of the prohibited area. This offer was not accepted so that the entire Satyagraha revolved, according to the Dewan, round mere sentiment. Though the Government had removed several disabilities in the past to give equality of opportunity to the depressed classes "the grant of permission to enter areas considered sacred by certain other sections of the Hindu community is of quite a different character as it would violate established rights based on religious faith."³⁵ The Dewan added that there "is a world of difference between Satyagraha meant to be an educative force and Satyagraha intended as an instrument for the coercion of the Government and through them the orthodox Hindus."³⁶ He was of the view that the Satyagrahis should have slowly attempted the persuasion and conversion of the orthodox classes to their point of view. A compromise acceptable to both the parties would be the only satisfactory solution and the caste Hindus should capture the time spirit and give up their prejudices militating against communal harmony rather than cling to the letter of the law which the Government, of course, was bound to maintain.

Anyway it was clear that the Government actively helped the defeat of the Vaikom Resolution, instead of remaining neutral.³⁷ Commenting on the views expressed by the Dewan, Gandhiji stated that the Satyagraha at Vaikom was meant to be educative force rather than an instrument of coercion; that was why fasting was not resorted to; the barricades were "scrupulously respected" and the police was never dodged. A mere appeal to reason would have no effect on those with settled convictions and so the Satyagrahi should open their eyes through suffering and reach the reason through the heart by awakening public opinion.³⁸

Gandhiji cheered up the Satyagrahis who were apparently getting impatient enough to think of the heroic remedy of crossing the border line at Vaikom. "To lose patience", he wrote, "is to lose the battle.....Breaking of heads will serve no purpose. To attempt to force the entry will invite stronger barricades.....I hope that the Satyagrahis will not swerve from their path even though their ranks may be thinned and victory may seem

35. The Dewan's Speech in the Assembly, 9 March, 1925.

36. *Ibid.*

37. The resolution was thrown out by a majority of 22 to 21 votes in the Legislative Council. The former was "made up of 15 officials, 3 nominated members, one Brahmin representative of vested interests and three elected members." (*Epic of Travancore* pages 15-16).

38. *Young India* dated 19 March, 1925.

further off than ever. Satyagraha is self-effacement, greatest humiliation, greatest patience and brightest faith. It is its own reward."³⁹

The Government was eager, if possible, to bring about a compromise acceptable to both the parties. The Dewan felt that while Gandhiji advocated passive suffering for a change of heart the Satyagrahis at Vaikom did not mind entering the prohibited area on the removal of the barricades and thereby causing injury to the feelings and the faith of the orthodox."⁴⁰ Gandhiji, accompanied by Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, arrived at Ernakulam, *en route* to Vaikom, on 8th March, 1925.⁴¹ He exhorted the Satyagrahis, who were more than fifty in number at the time, to forget the political aspect of the Satyagraha programme lest they should miss the desired result. No compulsion was to be imported in matters of religion but their suffering should be with detachment and without any trace of bitterness; it was not to be a mechanical act. "If you have" he added, "faith in the cause and the means and in God, the hot sun will be cool for you." Not a minute, not a grain of rice, not a scrap of paper, was to be wasted as they belong to the nation.⁴²

From Vaikom Gandhiji proceeded to Alleppey. He addressed public meetings at Panmana, Chavara and other places. Mr. K. G. Sankar had arranged a reception for him at Quilon. Gandhiji had interviews with the orthodox Nambudiris. Later he met the Maharani Regent, the Dewan and Mr. Pitt, the Commissioner of Police, with whom he came to an agreement.⁴³ The roads used by non-Hindus around the temple were to be opened to the *avarnas* but those in the *Sarketham* of the temple would continue to remain closed. Gandhiji called the settlement a 'bed-rock of freedom.' After a visit to Cape Comorin Gandhiji addressed more meetings on the themes of untouchability and communal harmony. It is noteworthy that he worshipped at no temple during this visit as the low castes continued to be shut out.

By August 1925 there were only ten volunteers at Vaikom. But they were those who caught the spirit of their work and gave a good

39. *The Epic of Travancore*, pages 16-17.

40. Confidential letter from T. Raghaviah, the Dewan, to Subrahmania Iyer, dated 8 March, 1925.

41. Letter from T. Raghaviah to C. Rajagopalachari dated 8 March, 1925.

42. *Young India* dated 19 March, 1925.

43. After the settlement at Vaikom, Mr. K. Kumar started a campaign to get the Aranmula temple road opened to Harijans. It was successful.

account of every minute at their disposal.⁴⁴ The reform came in dribblets. The struggle went on before the authorities finally relaxed and opened the roads on three sides of the temple at Vaikom. Their opening led to a demand for that of roads around other temples also. The Satyagraha started by Dr. M. E. Naidu at Suchindram in South Travancore in January, 1926 was a continuation of the peaceful struggle at Vaikom. The ultimate aim of the reformers was of course to remove every disability under which the untouchables laboured.

44. The day began at 4.30 a. m.; prayer covered half an hour; from 5 to 6 a. m. the volunteers swept the floor, drew water and cleaned the vessels. By 7 a. m. all Satyagrahis except two (who had to go for Satyagraha at 5.45 after bath) would be ready to spin or card until the time for going to the barricade. The spirit behind the spinning, as Gandhiji felt, was bound to tell in the long run for spinning, to the volunteers, was a sacrificial national act unconsciously calculated "to exhibit true humility, patience and pertinacity....." (*Young India* dated 24 September, 1925).

CHAPTER 13

A PERIOD OF LULL

It had been decided to hold the next Political Conference at Trichur but the Government of Cochin was adamant and prohibited all public meetings. On his release after six months from Trivandrum Central Jail during the historic Vaikom Satyagraha which had become an all-India issue, Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon had to leave Malabar for Madras to tend his ailing wife. Mr. P. Ramunni Menon, Editor of the *Mathrubhumi*, was thereupon elected at Trichur as the Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. Political work had been admittedly dull in Malabar after the Moplah rebellion. There was some activity only in the field of propaganda against untouchability. As a result of consistent anti-untouchability campaign, a change of heart became particularly noticeable at Kalpathy in Palghat, Vaikom and Suchindram.¹

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Ernakulam on 24 January 1924 and stressed much on organisational work. There was financial shortage and full-time workers were not available in adequate number. It was decided to enrol 10000 members in the Congress in the whole of Kerala,² to open khadi depots wherever possible, to organise a Volunteer Corps³ for propaganda work through the Province and to collect funds for the Tilak Swaraj Fund⁴. Political workers had to be given special training for the crusade against

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1. Members of low castes joined the Arya Samaj and entered Kalpathy Village as Arya Samajists had freedom of movement. This led to an incident and subsequent criminal proceedings in which the local Brahmin residents and the social reformers were involved. Anyway reformist tendencies gradually began to prevail over the forces of reaction.
 2. Travancore, 2500; Cochin, 2000; Calicut, 2000; Palghat, 2000; North Malabar, 1500. A. K. Pillai, *The Congress and Kerala*.
 3. In Travancore 150, in Cochin 100, in Palghat 50, in Calicut 100 and in North Malabar 50 volunteers were to be enrolled.
 4. It was proposed to collect Rs 1500 in Travancore, Cochin, Palghat and Calicut separately and Rs 500 in North Malabar. It was also settled that there should be at least 50 members in each Village Committee. To educate the people on the ideals and programme of the Congress, a committee was constituted including Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon, A. K. Pillai, Hassan Koya Mulla and Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad. Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon, A. K. Pillai and P. Ramunni Menon were asked to submit a plan for imparting proper

untouchability. The Congress as a party also decided to contest elections to the Local Boards and Municipal Councils.

It was about this time that terrible floods swept over Kerala. The ravages caused by them demanded the immediate attention of the Congressmen who had to organise relief work on a large scale for the thousands of families that had been rendered homeless. It would appear that the All-India Congress Committee was not quite sure whether such humanitarian activities came within the sphere of the political work of the Congress. Anyway Gandhiji started the collection of money on his own initiative. Money from this source arrived a bit late though much could be done out of the funds received from Madras.

The session of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee held at Vaikom in April, 1925 brought about important organisational changes in the interests of efficiency. Work that had been diverted from the political field to flood relief and anti-untouchability campaign had to be resumed in Kerala. It was decided to shift the headquarters of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee from Calicut to a central place like Ernakulam, reduce the number of members in that body to 75 and have a permanent President for the same. The Secretary, Treasurer and President were in future to be elected by the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee while the Working Committee was to consist of ten members. In view of its large size and population, Travancore was to be divided into four Congress Districts⁵.

Mr. K. Madhavan Nair came, thus, to be chosen as the first President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, in its new set-up.

On 11 April 1925 the North Malabar District Conference was convened at Tellicherry with Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar of Madras in the chair⁶. He regretted that political work in Malabar was not proceeding satisfactorily and appealed to all, particularly lawyers and

training to the Congress workers. The District Committees were authorised to put up candidates for elections to the Municipal Bodies and Local Boards. A sub-committee including Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon, A. K. Pillai and A. S. Krishna Iyer was formed to suggest suitable amendments to the rules of the Provincial Committee.

5. There were to be 75 members in the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, viz., seven members from each of the four Districts in Travancore, eight from Cochin, seven from South Malabar, eight from Central Malabar and eight from North Malabar, and two representatives of each of the District Committees.
6. Mr. Narayanan Nambiar was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. There was also a conference of students presided over by Mr. K. T. Chandu Nambiar.

students, to strengthen the Congress and work for Hindu-Muslim unity.

In spite of the new orientation given to the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee political work continued to be at a low ebb in Malabar. It was found that there was no quorum for a meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee proposed to be held at Cannanore. Similarly another meeting proposed to be held at Cochin in June 1925 also had to be postponed. Mr. P. Ramunni Menon resigned his office of Secretary whereupon Mr. S. K. Kombrabail was chosen as the Acting Secretary. Gandhiji wondered whether the people of Malabar were in so deep a slumber that they could not respond to the call of the Congress. Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, then General Secretary of the Indian National Congress, complained that he could not get even a list of the Congress Committees in Kerala. There was not much of enthusiasm, or any noticeable fighting spirit.

The workers were at this time very much concerned with the activities of the Swarajist Party and the impending general elections to the Legislative Council. The Swarajist Party established several branches and local committees⁷.

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Calicut on 20 July, 1925 when Messrs. K. Madhavan Nair, K. Kelappan and K. Madhava Menon were elected as President, Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Mr. Kelappan resigned his office at the meeting of the same body held subsequently at Trichur and Mr. Kurur Nilakantan Nambudripad stepped into his shoes.

On 14 August, 1925 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee decided that in view of the prevailing political conditions in Malabar its members could be generally permitted to co-operate and work with other political and non-political parties which also had more or less the same objectives⁸. Thus came into existence the Malabar

7. In June 1925 under the auspices of a new organisation called Kerala Swarajya Party, a meeting was held at Tellicherry under the presidentship of Mr. V. Krishna Menon, Bar-at-Law. At Calicut Mr. T. V. Sundara Iyer was the President of Swarajya Party Committee and Mr. K. Madhava Menon Mr. A. Karunakara Menon were Secretaries. As regards the Valluvanad Committee Mr. M. M. Kunhirama Menon of Pattambi Bar, Mr. K. C. K. Thampan and Mr. Chettur Sekharan Nair were the President, Vice-President and Secretary respectively.

8. The objectives were self-government for India within the scope indicated by Dr. Besant's Commonwealth Bill, Hindu-Muslim Unity, abolition of untouchability and encouragement of *swadeshi*.

United Nationalist Party organised for the avowed purpose of accelerating nationalist work. It was a hotch-potch arrangement including Moderates, Independents and members of the Congress and Justice Parties. It would appear that Mr. K. Madhavan Nair, President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, was the Secretary of the new organisation. A policy of unanimity in important affairs, freedom of action in controversial matters and a liberal attitude of compromise towards all affairs were expected to bind all the members of the new organisation to a sense of fraternity. Under the auspices of this party, a Political Conference was held at Calicut on 6 October 1925 with Mr. G. A. Saldanah, the Member of the Legislative Council, Madras, in the chair⁹.

At the meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee held in May, 1926 it was resolved to put up Mr. K. Madhavan Nair and Mr. V. Krishna Menon as Congress candidates in the fourth-coming elections of the Madras Legislative Council. The return of both by a huge majority served to revive the drooping spirit of the Congress men in Malabar.

The third Provincial Conference met at Calicut on 16 and 17 April 1927, the session being presided over by Mr. B. G. Horniman, Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*. Mr. K. Madhavan Nair, Chairman of the Reception Committee, referred to the inertia among Congressmen noticeable after the Moplah rebellion that had practically upset all social and political work in the District. The authorities were suspicious of all who wore khadi and imprisoned many of those who had sincerely attempted to pacify the rebels. On account of the repressive policy, several people were reluctant to do any kind of national work openly in Malabar. Conditions were equally bad in the Princely States of Travancore and Cochin, particularly the latter. Mr. Horniman declared that the attainment of *swaraj* was the only panacea for all the ills.

The Conference passed several resolutions bearing upon a number of subjects. It expressed sorrow at the death of Swami Shradhdhananda; congratulated the Maharani of Travancore for having ended animal sacrifice in the State; condemned the action of the Government in sending Moplah women to the Andamans; sympathised with the freedom movement in China and appealed to the Government to release Mr. M. P. Narayana Menon from jail as well as those Moplahs against whom no proof of violence could be adduced. It

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- J. Mr. K. P. Raman Menon was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The President, in his speech, stressed the objectives noted above. The birth of the United Nationalist Party, comments Mr. A. K. Pillai, indicated that Congressmen had little confidence in themselves at this time.

further recognised the need for proper legislation to safeguard the interests of tenants and to obtain control over the administration of Local Boards and Municipalities. It appealed to the Hindus and Muslims to preserve social amity and get rid of communal electorates, and also protested against the action of the Congress members in not having voted against the Ministers' Salary Bill in the Madras Legislature.

As regards the Princely States, the Conference was of the view that the constitution of the Congress should be amended to enable it to interfere in their internal affairs. The Congressmen in Malabar had often been expressing such an opinion as a majority of the people in Kerala belong to Cochin and Travancore but neither the All-India Congress Committee nor the Working Committee would appear to have considered the issue with the seriousness it deserved. The Conference also opined that peasants and workers should be given adequate representation in the Congress organisation. A resolution in favour of complete independence as the goal of the Congress was however opposed by a majority at the Conference¹⁰.

10. It would appear that Messrs. K. Kelappan, K. Madhavan Nair and P. Ramunn. Menon supported the resolution while Mr. U. Gopala Menon, Mr. T. R. Krishna Swamy Iyer and Mr. K. Madhava Menon opposed it.

CHAPTER 14

LAHORE RESOLUTION

The political lethargy that had gripped Malabar after the Moplah rebellion gradually began to vanish. The Congress leaders whose attention had been side-tracked by the Vaikom Satyagraha turned once again to political work. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, with its headquarters at Calicut, did much to awaken the people of Malabar. The political atmosphere came to be most surcharged with emotional excitement on 8 November 1927 by the simultaneous official announcements made in the British Parliament and in India regarding the appointment of the promised Statutory Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon, constituted to enquire into the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and examine the fitness of Indians for self-government. That announcement accomplished, at a stroke, what political propaganda for years could not achieve in India. A wave of indignation swept over the entire country.

The exclusion of Indians from the personnel of the Simon Commission naturally caused country-wide resentment and evoked universal condemnation by individuals and organisations as a "negation of the fundamental right of self-determination which is inherent in every nation."¹ On 16 November appeared the Leaders' Manifesto, bearing the signatures of prominent leaders of all parties in India. It stated:²

"We have come to the deliberate conclusion that the exclusion of Indians from the Commission is fundamentally wrong and that the proposals about committees of Legislatures being allowed to submit their views to the Commission and later to confer with the Joint Parliamentary Committee are wholly inadequate to meet the requirements of the case. The underlying principle of the scheme that Indians are to have no authoritative voice either in the collection of proper materials and evidence or in the taking of decisions by way of recommendations of the Commission or Parliament is of such a character that India cannot, with any self-respect, acquiesce in it. Unless a Commission on which the British and Indian statesmen are

1. Annual Report of the Congress, 1927.

2. The Indian Quarterly Register, Vol.II, 1927.

invited to sit on equal terms is set up we cannot conscientiously take any part or share in the work of the Commission as at present constituted."

The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress adopted the following resolution on the subject:

"As the British Government had constituted the Statutory Commission in defiance of the national will and rejected the national demand for a Round Table Conference to settle a *swaraj* constitution for India, the Working Committee of the Congress calls upon the people of India and appeals to all political parties to abstain from co-operating with the said Commission either by giving evidence or by voting for or serving on any Select Committee connected therewith."

At its Madras session held in December, 1927 the Congress again resolved that the only "self-respecting course for India to adopt is to boycott the Commission at every stage and in every form."^{2a}

In Kerala also, accordingly, the Congress came forward to organise a thorough boycott of the Commission. A hopeful feature in Malabar at that time was the decision of the leaders of the old Home Rule League, Dr. Annie Besant and Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer, to make the boycott a complete success. Thus, once again in Malabar the Home Rule League and the Congress joined together and the people became more enthusiastic than ever.

A largely attended conference of all parties was held on 1 December, 1927 in the Town Hall, Calicut, to concert measures for the boycott of the Simon Commission. Dr. Annie Besant was foremost among the leaders who organised it. Party leaders and delegates as well as large number of non-aligned individuals, hitherto indifferent to party politics, attended the conference. Only a few members of the Justice Party stood aloof. Resolutions were passed calling upon all citizens of India, particularly those of Kerala, to have nothing to do with the unwanted Commission and to organise

2a. An earnest effort was made to popularise the great ideals, proclaimed at the Congress Session at Madras, among the people of the Princely State of Travancore. In the summer of 1928 a great conference, under the presidency of Mr. P. Kunjan Pillai was convened at Shasthamkotta on the initiative of Mr. Kumbalathu Sanku Pillai. It was addressed by eminent leaders like Messrs. K. P. Kesava Menon, K. Kelappan, A. K. Pillai and Kurur Nilakantan Nampudiripad. At the meeting the participants burnt foreign cloth in a bonfire. This was followed by another meeting held at Katambanad the next day. Such conferences roused the people to a new sense of duty and responsibility.

demonstrations, meetings and hartal on the date of their arrival in India. This was a highly hopeful sign of the new political awakening in Malabar to which the large number of delegates and visitors who had participated in the annual session of the Congress at Madras and the All India Youth Congress and the All-India Khadi and Swadeshi Exhibition held as adjuncts to it contributed in no small measure.

In January, 1928 the north Malabar Political Conference was held at Cannanore under presidentship of Mr. K. Madhavan Nair and the resentment against the Commission vehemently expressed. Mr. K. Uppi Saheb, M. L. C. in his welcome speech, condemned the Government's effort to sustain the communal split between the Hindus and the Muslims while Mr. Madhavan Nair asserted that independence was the only solution to the problems that India faced.

The leaders lost no time in organising demonstrations and public meetings to carry on the propaganda against the Commission. An influential Boycott Committee was formed for the whole of Malabar with headquarters at Calicut. This Committee, the Secretary of which was Mr. P. K. Kunhisankara Menon of the Calicut Bar, toured all over the important places in Malabar. Messrs. Manjeri Rama Iyer, K. Madhavan Nair, P. Ramunni Menon, U. Gopala Menon, P. Achuthan and K. Madhava Menon did much propaganda in this connection making arrangements for public demonstrations. The great enthusiasm evinced by the people caused much embarrassment to the Government which was anxious to prove to the world that ever since the disturbances of 1921, political activity in Malabar had become moribund. The District authorities persuaded the reactionaries to organise, with the help of the police, demonstrations to show that Indians would welcome the Simon Commission. The knowledge that the Government-sponsored movement was afoot to belittle Malabar served only to kindle the fire of patriotism in the hearts of the intelligentsia who carried on their propaganda with redoubled energy.

On 3 February 1928, the day on which the Simon Commission landed in Bombay, a highly successful *hartal* was observed in every nook and corner of Malabar, as in other parts of India. A storm blew over the land. Students abstained from attending the classes. Lawyers did not turn up at the courts. Shops were closed. Black flags fluttered everywhere. At various public meetings resolutions were passed protesting against the Simon Commission's visit.

In some places there were minor clashes between the boycotting demonstrators and the loyalists. At Calicut, the stronghold of both the sections, for example, the atmosphere was tense. Though the police force was in evidence everywhere, the *hartal* in the town was

a great success. In order to welcome the Simon Commission, the anti-boycott party organised, with the help of the police, a meeting at Paran Square, always the venue of activity of the reactionaries at Calicut. A few minutes before the scheduled time of the meeting, however, a huge procession led by Messrs. Manjeri Rama Iyer, K. Madhavan Nair and P. K. Kunhisankara Menon marched into Paran Square and took possession of all the seats. Mr. Rama Iyer made a powerful speech, exposing the hollowness of the argument that only a private meeting of the organisers was intended and making it clear that his followers would not allow any resolution welcoming the Commission, to be passed at the meeting in the name of the people of Calicut. He claimed for himself and his followers, the right to speak against any such resolution. He got from the sponsors of the meeting an assurance that no resolution would be passed in the name of the people of Calicut. The demonstrators then marched jubilantly to the Town Hall where a large number of leading citizens of Calicut had already assembled. The meeting, presided over by Mr. K. Madhavan Nair passed resolutions advocating the boycott of the Simon Commission.

In spite of instructions from the Government of Madras the Municipal Schools at Calicut stopped work on 3 February under the orders of the Municipal Chairman, Mr. E. Narayanan Nair, a leading member of the Calicut Bar. A black flag was hoisted on the Municipal Office building. When, on the initiative of two loyalist Municipal Councillors inspired by the Government, a notice of no-confidence motion against the Chairman was given, the whole of Calicut got excited. At a public meeting in the Town Hall presided over by Mr. Mullasserri Gopala Menon, the part played by the Municipal Chairman and most of the Municipal Councillors was praised and confidence in them recorded.

Black-flag demonstrations and protest meetings were organised in other parts of Malabar also. They served to galvanise the people into active political work and paved the way for an effective freedom struggle to be launched in the immediate future.

Meanwhile at Madras, Mr. T. R. Venkatarama Sastri had been appointed as Law Member, in the place of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer. When Mr. Sastri resigned in protest against the removal, by the Government, of the police portfolio from the new Law Member, Dewan Bahadur M. Krishnan Nair, a nominee of the Justice Party, was appointed to the office. On 2 April 1928 another public meeting

3. They were Messrs. C. Krishnan, Editor of the *Mitavadi*, T. M. K. Nedungadi and K. C. Menon who argued that as it was only a private meeting, none had the right to speak there who did not eye to eye with its conveners.

was held in the Town Hall, Calicut to condemn Mr. Krishnan Nair's acceptance of office as well as the political tactics of Dr. P. Subbarayan then Chief Minister of Madras. The resolution to that effect was moved by Mr. K. Madhavan Nair.'

On 15 April, 1928 a meeting⁴ of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was held at Badagara in North Malabar at which it was resolved to send Mr. S. K. Kombrabail as a representative of the Kerala Congress Committee to the All-party Conference and to hold the next Kerala Provincial Conference in May at Payyannur, a remote village in the northern-most part of Malabar.

The Payyannur Conference, the fourth of the Kerala Provincial Conferences, was held on 25, 26 and 27 May under the presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, then General Secretary of the Indian National Congress. A large number of delegates and visitors participated in the conference.⁵ Pandit Nehru in his inspiring speech, pointed out that Indians should concentrate attention on the establishment of a democratic republic and join other nations in founding a world state based on international co-operation, national economic independence, equality and social justice. He exhorted the people to get rid of all social evils which are a negation of democratic ideals, put an end to economic exploitation, develop an objective and critical attitude to life's problems and realise that the ideal of independence is not to create vested interests but establish a social order guaranteeing freedom and equality of opportunity for all. He

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4. A small section of the audience staged a walk-out and attempted to congratulate Mr. Krishnan Nair at a separate meeting in the Mananchira Gardens, a furlong from the Town Hall. But a large crowd who followed them frustrated this attempt.
 5. At this meeting, Mr. V. Krishna Menon pointed out that though Mr. K. Madhavan Nair had publicly condemned Mr. Krishnan Nair's appointment, he had also, without any consistency, sent a telegram congratulating him. Mr. Madhavan Nair in his reply confessed that it was an error on his part and expressed regret whereupon the Committee passed a resolution accepting his explanation and recording confidence in him. At this meeting the differences among the congressmen were ironed out and the lull in Congress work broken.
 6. Besides the Political Conference, there were also Malayalam Literary Conference, North Malabar Nair Conference, Social Reform Conference, Kerala Araya Conference, and an Exhibition of Khadi and *swadeshi* products.

At the Political Conference Mr. K. T. Kammaran Nambiar, Chairman of the Reception Committee, said that though complete independence was the political goal of India she would not, for the moment, be dissatisfied with Dominion Status.

particularly reminded them that they should transfer their thoughts from the glories of the past to the problems of the present and the future.

The Payyannur Conference passed resolutions⁷ emphasising the need for making Kerala a separate Province in the future constitutional set-up; congratulating the heroic people of Bardoli who were fighting for the recognition of their legitimate rights; condemning the deportation of Moplah families to the Andamans;⁸ demanding the establishment of responsible government in Princely States; and recommending that complete independence⁹ should be adopted as the goal of the Congress.

Pandit Nehru was much impressed by the sincerity of the delegates. After the Conference he visited Calicut and gave the political workers wholesome advice in regard to organisational matters.¹⁰

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7. One of the resolutions demanded protection for the interests of tenants. The landlords present opposed it which, however, was passed by a huge majority.
 8. The resolution on Moplah families, moved by Mr. K. Uppl Saheb was supported by Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer.
 9. The resolution on complete independence was moved by Mr. K. Madhavanar but opposed by a section of the delegates including Messrs. Manjeri Rama Iyer, U. Gopala Menon, P. Achuthan etc., who believed that it would isolate the Congress from the people. Mr. K. Kelappan declared that the strength of the Congress lay not in number but in its spirit of sacrifice and self-confidence. Finally the resolution was passed by a majority.
 10. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, after his return to Allahabad, stated in a letter that there were ample possibilities for serious political work in Kerala though, unfortunately, there was no proper organisation at the time. Political work, to a great extent, would depend on active workers and the free flow of money. He suggested that the Provincial Committee in Kerala should have a regular office and a salaried Assistant Secretary because the services of full time workers were indispensable for any political organisation. As far as possible every District Congress Committee also should have a salaried Assistant Secretary. The Provincial Congress Committee should collect Rs. 200 a month and the District Committees Rs. 50 each. Of course for special purposes money would have to be collected separately but the members should be expected to subscribe to or collect money for the Congress Fund on a regular basis just as the members of political organisations in western countries. Pandit Nehru also sent Rs. 50 as his own contribution to the Provincial Congress Committee. (Pandit Nehru's letter to Mr. K. Madhavan Nair, dated 10 June 1928).

The All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay on 25 May 1929 and passed a resolution directing the Congress Members of all the Provincial Legislative Councils, except those of Bengal and Assam, to boycott them and devote their full time for carrying out the programme of the Congress. This resolution was urged by the proposal of the Government of India to extend the term of all the Legislative Councils so that the electorate in the country might not be able to record, through a fresh election, their emphatic protest against the Government and the Simon Commission; in Bengal and Assam, a reasonable time had not yet elapsed after the local elections and so the Councillors in both were permitted to attend the first session of their respective Legislative Councils to register themselves as Members. The resolution also called on the Legislators to resist the repressive policy of the Government. The meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Delhi decided that it would be in the interests of the Swarajist Party to advise the Members of the various Legislatures to resign their seats. In this way Mr. K. Madhavan Nair, President of the Kerala Congress Committee, was prevented from attending any meeting of the Madras Legislative Council of which he was an elected Member. But finally it was decided by the Working Committee to permit the Members of all Provincial Councils to attend their sessions until the proposed Lahore Session of the Congress and Mr. Madhavan Nair also was thus enabled to participate effectively in the debate on the Malabar Tenancy Bill in the Madras Legislative Council.¹¹

It was in this atmosphere of general political excitement caused by the appointment of the Simon Commission that the forty-fourth session of the Indian National Congress met at Lahore from 29 to

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11. Mr. K. Madhavan Nair was in a great dilemma as the Council was about to discuss the Tenancy Bill for Malabar. He had promised the electorate that he would strive for the removal of all disabilities from which the large mass of tenants had been suffering. His absence, from the debate, would therefore amount to the betrayal of their interests and the violation of their mandate at a critical time. The Kerala Congress Committee and the *Malabar Kudiyan (tenant) Sangh* requested the Congress President to exempt him temporarily from the operation of the Congress resolution. Mr. G. Sankaran Nair, as the special representative of the tenants in Malabar, attended the meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress at Allahabad and made a representation in this connection. Though the Congress President felt that it would neither be proper nor practicable to exempt the Members from the operation of the resolution, the Working Committee finally withdrew from its original stand for there were similar requests from the Members of other Provincial Councils also.

31 December 1929, with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, as its President. The Lahore session became momentous for having passed the historic resolution, sponsored by Gandhiji himself, on complete independence. The resolution stated:

This Congress in pursuance of the resolution passed at its session at Calcutta last year, declares that the word 'swaraj' in Article 1 of the Congress constitution shall mean complete independence and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee's report to have lapsed and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of complete independence for India. As a preliminary step towards organising a campaign for independence and in order to make the Congress policy as consistent as possible with the change of creed, this Congress resolves upon a complete boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures and Committees constituted by Government and calls upon Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in future elections and directing the present Congress Members of the Legislatures and Committees to resign their seats. This Congress appeals to the nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress and authorises the All-India Congress Committee, whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary.

At midnight on that day the Congress tricolour flag, symbolic of India's independence, was unfurled amidst shouts of *Inquilab Zindabad*. They produced an echo in the heart of every patriot.

CHAPTER 15

THE INDIAN STATES COMMITTEE

After the constitutional reforms had been put into effect in British India in 1920, some of the Princes of Central and Northern India sought from the British Government the establishment of the Chamber of Princes which was formally inaugurated by the Duke of Connaught on 8 February, 1921. Nearly two hundred of the Princes were deemed to be of great importance and while some of them were members of the Chamber in their own right, others were entitled only to elect representatives to that body. The purpose of the Chamber was to protect the treaty rights and privileges of the Princes and their States and it could discuss with the various Departments of the Government of India, matters in which the Governments of both the Princely States and British India were interested.

The Princes had been greatly perturbed at the prospect of the grant of Dominion Status to British India. When the appointment of a Commission to investigate the questions of the system of government, growth of education, development of representative institutions and further instalment of reforms in British India was announced, they naturally urged and secured the appointment of a Committee to hold an enquiry into the problems of Indian States as well. The Butler Committee was thus constituted to report on the relations between the Paramount Power and the Princely States with reference to the rights and obligations arising from treaties, engagements and usages as well as on the financial and economic relations between British India and the States. The ultimate cause of Committee's proposed investigation might be traced back to the Report of 1918 on constitutional reforms to India in which it had been declared that the constitutional position in British India could not be considered without also taking into account the problems presented by the Princely States.

Several Princes from Central and Northern India visited England in a body to present their views before the Butler Committee and presumably the Secretary of State for India as well and obtained general assurances regarding their future position in any new scheme of constitutional reform.

Sir Leslie Scott enunciated, on behalf of the Princes, certain theories which did not meet with any general approval, except of a few. Neither the Butler Committee nor the British Government

would appear to have given any encouragement to the specific demands put forward by the Princes. Travancore and Cochin, along with some other States, declined to be represented by Sir Leslie Scott and preferred to state their own case in written replies to the questionnaire issued by the Butler Committee. While the Butler Committee printed the joint opinion of five eminent counsels led by Sir Leslie Scott, of the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes, they did not extend similar courtesy to the views expressed by important States like Travancore.

The Indian States Committee had wanted that the States should have an opportunity to place their views before the Committee as far as they were covered by the terms of reference. The Committee did not want to limit the evidence which the States might wish to adduce or to object to "past decisions and present differences" being reviewed as far as they illustrated the relationship between the Paramount Power and the States. It was in response to the Committee's general invitation that the Government of Travancore drafted and submitted their Memorandum.

According to the Travancore Memorandum, the States relationship with the Paramount Power derived its existence from the two ultimate sources of treaty and usage. The spirit of supremacy of the Paramount Power pervaded the entire relationship as it "is not based only upon treaties and engagements but exists independently of them".¹ When imperial interests and the general welfare of the people of the State were seriously affected by the action of the State Government, the Paramount Power would have to take the ultimate responsibility for necessary remedial action; subject to this supremacy of the Paramount Power, the Government of Travancore could be regarded as autonomous in the exercise of its internal sovereignty. The Maharaja was bound² to pay the utmost attention to the advice that the Paramount Power might administer from time to time. This was indeed a comprehensive power which the Paramount Power could apply to overwhelm the State's autonomy. In fact it had been resorted to in negotiations, control over legislation, administration of justice, official appointments and also in cases of complaints.³ Mr. Watts, Dewan of Travancore, pointed

1. Memorandum by Dewan, M. E. Watts, dated 21 April 1928.

2. Article 9, Travancore Treaty of 1805.

3. Thus in the first place as regards negotiations, the power was invoked twice earlier, to the economic detriment of the State in business transactions with the Government of Madras in regard to the Inter-Portal Trade Convention entered into between the Governments of Travancore and Cochin and British India in 1865 and later in regard to the Periyar Lease of 1886 whereby water

but in the Memorandum that such form of intervention should indeed be modified. Travancore had a Legislative Council with an elected and non-official majority and all proposed laws were placed on the

from a river in Travancore was diverted for the benefit of irrigation in Madurai District. In British India an area of 1,43,000 acres of land was thus newly brought under cultivation resulting in considerable economic benefit to the people of Madurai and the net revenue derived by the Government of Madras in 1925-1926 was Rs. 4,29,238. The construction of the Periyar Dam involved the submersion of 13.4 square miles of land in Travancore which got in return an annual rent of only Rs. 42,964 at the rate of Rs. 5 per acre. The Dewan in 1883 had pointed out the injustice resulting from the one-sided nature of the arrangement and sought better terms. (See his Letter No. 1764-p. 172 dated June 1883). "His Highness," he added "will gladly bow to any decision which may be finally come to by the British Government as the Paramount Power being convinced that they are at all times disposed to regard the interests of native States in Friendly alliance with themselves as identical with their own....." In reply to this note, the Government of Madras conveyed their acknowledgment "for the courtesy he (the Maharaja) has shown in thus waiving his views". (Their order No. 577, Political, dated 9 August 1883). It should be noted that Travancore had not waived her claims and practically the order of the Government of Madras was tantamount to the super-imposition of their will under Article 9 of the Treaty of 1805.

Secondly, as regards the British Indian Government's control over legislation in Travancore, there was nothing in the terms of the same Treaty to support such supervision as in the Mysore Instrument of Rendition of 1881. Yet Article 9 in the Treaty was being utilised in support of such power. In 1882 the Government of Madras desired that they would be supplied with three complete sets of all existing Regulations and Royal Proclamations having the force of law as well as the copy of any proposed Law or Proclamation before its issue; ordinarily the Governor-in-Council would have only to express approval of such measures but occasionally an advice to the Maharaja would be desirable "in consonance with the terms of the Treaty with native States....." (Madras Government Order, No. 205 dated 22 July 1882). In this way from 1882 onwards the Government of Travancore used to forward legislative Bills to the Resident and pass them into law duly after obtaining the approval of the British Indian Government. Sometimes a Bill was sent before first publication; at other times it was sent before first publication as well as after revision by the Select Committee; later the practice was for a Bill to be sent after the second reading and before the final passing by the Legislative Council. When the Madras Government's order was received there was no Legislative Council in the State which first emerged only in 1888. Though the object of the Government of Madras might have been to examine whether imperial interests or those of the people of the State were affected by the proposed legislation it became the practice subsequently to direct amendments that had no bearing on such matters. For example in

Statute Book only after they were passed by the Council except those affecting the ruling family or the Paramount Power. This was a sufficient guarantee that Bills affecting the welfare of the

1890 a Bill was introduced in the Council to correct a defect in the Arms Regulation but the Resident wanted to substitute a comprehensive draft of his own that would disarm the whole population without even the reservations provided by the British Indian Act. On a later occasion the Political Agent suggested an amendment to the Travancore Cinematograph Regulation so as to secure recognition in the State, of films passed as unobjectionable by the British Indian censoring authorities. Though this direction was withdrawn later, it indicated however in what manner the power of supervision over legislation was being exercised. While Article 18 of the Mysore Treaty of 1913 provided that the Maharaja should not repeal or modify any law that existed in 1881 or pass any law or rule inconsistent therewith except with the previous consent of the Governor General-in-Council, there was no similar provision in the Travancore Treaty.

Thirdly, there was a lot of interference with the judicial administration of the State. Judgments of the Travancore High Court in criminal cases where capital or life sentences were awarded had to be sent by the Dewan to the Political Agent before they were submitted to the Maharaja for formal approval as required by law. The practice had arisen at a time when there were no regular courts of judicature in the modern sense in the State. Really, under law, the Agent had no authority to intervene, yet he used to suggest that the sentences awarded were inadequate. On one occasion the Resident commented that "the omission of the lower and appellate courts to award it (extreme penalty) in such a case clearly shows that they are influenced by personal predilectionsor in other words that they prefer their private opinions to the prescriptions of the Legislature." Though the commutation of capital into life sentence was possible by the exercise of sovereign clemency the converse position advised by the British Government was inconceivable. The Chief Justice naturally protested that the imputation conveyed by the Resident's letter was so "grave and prejudicial to the prestige of the Court that silence in the face of it might at some future time, be mistaken as amounting virtually to a plea of guilty to the charge" and that "I consider the imputation in the present instance to be without foundation and altogether unmerited." The Supreme Court in Travancore which had been an Appeal Court in 1835 and a Sadr Court in 1861 was reconstituted as a High Court in 1882 more or less on the pattern of High Courts of Judicature in British India. Eminent jurists had adorned its Bench and its decisions had been quoted with approval outside Travancore and even by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Government of Travancore felt that the practice of reference to the British Resident was unnecessary, ineffective and inconsistent with the dignity of the High Court.

Fourthly, the Resident used to interfere with the appointments made in the State. In 1870 the Resident thought that it was his privilege and duty to

people of the State adversely would not be passed, apart from the good sense of the citizens and the loyalty of the Travancore House that would not countenance any measure jeopardising imperial

advise the State on all important matters as well as to be kept fully informed about matters for which he would be answerable. (Resident's Letter to the Dewan, 3 February 1870). The Dewan, Sir T. Madhava Rao, pointed out in his reply that the Government should not do anything fettering its own discretion as that would be a source of embarrassment for the future. The appointments made by the Maharaja to posts below the Dewanship were those of the Sadr and Zillah Judges and Dewan Peishkars. In regard to them, the Dewan would consult the Resident. This procedure became crystallised in 1905 when it was laid down that he should be consulted previously in regard to all appointments and promotions to offices on Rs 500 and above *per mensem*. In 1906 the Resident insisted that he should be consulted even when short vacancies of the office of High Court Judge were filled though temporary appointments to other less important posts could be made without ordinarily consulting him in case of his absence or any urgency, provided the acting arrangement would give no additional claim to confirmation. (Resident's Letter to the Dewan, 27 December, 1905). From that time onwards the Dewan used to convey to the Resident the fact of appointment demi-officially and the formula adopted by the Agent in acknowledging the letter invariably was that the appointment was noted. In 1906 the Resident wrote that his formal approval was not necessary in the case of all important appointments but he expected that the Dewan would inform him about the nominations that he proposed to submit to the Maharaja in regard to them so that proper advice might be given where necessary. (Letter from the Resident to the Dewan, 29 March 1906). On a later occasion, the Resident regretted that there was a deviation from the established procedure of such prior consultation in the case of two acting appointments. (His letter to the Dewan dated 31 March, 1928).

Fifthly, the Resident enjoyed the right to receive and take cognizance of complaints about particular instances of alleged misconduct or injustice in revenue or judicial administration and he would ordinarily do no more than transmit them to the State Government for disposal. There might be also petitions implying a certain amount of political insubordination or persecution of individuals for having taken complaints to the British authorities; such petitions might easily be the fruit of intrigue, contumacy or gross and false exaggeration. (See Tupper, *Our Indian Protectorate*, Chap. XVI). On one occasion when a minor official was compelled to retire for official misconduct, the Resident wrote, "I cannot but form the opinion that this servant of the State has not been treated fairly or with justice." It was odd that in this case the petition itself had not been shown to the Dewan and that the Resident exercised the right to receive and take action on communications and reports addressed directly to him by Heads of Departments on official matters.

interests. The Travancore Memorandum demanded that legislation in the State should be left to its own Government; that the Government of India might tender advice at any stage of legislation on considerations of imperial interests or serious injury to popular welfare; and that while Bills might be forwarded to the Agent to the Governor-General at all stages, the Government of Travancore should not be compelled to receive his remarks before proceeding with the Bills in due course. Further the Memorandum wanted that the right of intervention on the part of the British Indian Government in the making of official appointments (of Rs. 500 and above) might be waived so far as the objection to the practice was intrinsic in character; neither the Resident nor the British Indian Government could accept full responsibility for such appointments; the Dewan too could not divest himself of responsibility in the matter should the Resident intervene. The Government of Travancore was of the view that even the formality of intimation about the appointments should be dispensed with. Moreover the Resident's practice of taking cognisance of petitions directly submitted to him by Government servants militated against official discipline and was subversive of constituted authority in the State; the Memorandum therefore demanded that such interference should be ended forthwith.*

The Travancore Memorandum next referred to the rank enjoyed by the Ruler of Travancore. He was next in rank to the Rulers of Hyderabad, Baroda and Mysore and demanded "a higher rank than they (Travancore Rulers) have now come to occupy". The Memorandum also pointed to the use of certain words and phrases⁴

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4. On the occasion of his investiture ceremony, on 6 November, 1931 Sri Chitra Tirunal Maharaja referred to the political practices and conventions that had enabled the Resident to interfere in the affairs of the State in a manner not warranted by the provisions of the subsisting Treaties. The Government of India ordered the discontinuance of such interference, convinced by the force of the representations made by Travancore. Thus the Maharaja deemed himself to be "in fact, as in law, the legislative Sovereign, the fountain of justice and the Supreme Executive Head of the State."
 5. Many words and phrases in common use in the Indian States had been placed on a political *index expurgatorius*. Their employment in communications reaching the Government of India was forbidden. Thus the term *Prince* or *Princess* was not to be used, in reference to the junior members of a Ruling House; Travancore was advised to replace the word *Reign* by *Administration*, although the connotation of the two words is different. The word Government was for some time tabooed and for some years legislation had to resort to the round-about device of "*the Dewan under Our sanction*". Any word or expression suggestive of royalty could never be used lest it should meet the eye of the Government of India.

including the term '*Durbar*',⁶ by which the Government of India referred to a State Government in India. The Government of Travancore felt that this expression conveyed little meaning to South Indian Hindu States in general and that it was hardly applicable to a constitutional government as that of Travancore, the Ruler of which was outside and above the administration. It was therefore demanded that the term might be substituted by '*Government*'.

It was natural that at a critical time in the political history of the country when the people of British India were struggling against foreign imperialism, the people of Indian States also should have thought of co-operating with them and attempting a permanent solution to the problem of responsible government. They appreciated that the question of constitutional reform in India was an indivisible problem demanding a single solution. The Indian States Peoples' Conference met in Bombay in December 1927 and sent a deputation to England towards the latter half of 1928 "to press their views on the attention of the Butler Committee and the authorities in Whitehall." The Indian States Committee received a Memorandum from that body. Anyway the deputation made known to the British public the disabilities from which the people in Indian States suffered. The House of Lords discussed the issue at the instance of Lord Oliver, former Secretary of State for India. Evidently the British Government at the time had formed no idea as to what place the Indian States should occupy in the future constitutional arrangement. No constitution intended to be permanent could afford to ignore the States that occupied nearly forty per cent of the total area of the country and contained nearly twenty three per cent of the total population.

The Memorandum of the Indian States' People was highly critical of the Political Department that displayed "vigilant solicitude" where imperial interests were involved and "utter indifference" where the welfare of the people was concerned. The Indian States were in a lamentable condition of political backwardness and in many of them even local self-government did not exist. There was no executive responsibility, no extension of free primary education, no definite Civil List, no independent audit. The Rule of Law, an important factor of constitutional government, was totally absent. The

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6. The term *Durbar* carried with it a vague suggestion of autocracy that the Ruler personally was the Government. This idea did not embody the real position in Travancore as far as public acts and the conduct of administration were concerned. In the case of Travancore the term *Government* was more suitable as the State was enjoying the blessings of representative government.

Memorandum therefore demanded an investigation of the extent to which the Paramount Power had discharged its duty of securing the welfare of the people of the Indian States. The Ruler had not appreciated the political ideal of responsible government though their subjects had every sympathy with the political movement in British India. So the Memorandum desired that the Political Department should be Indianised and made responsible to the Central Legislature and that one-sided protection should not be extended to the Rulers. The Paramount Power should enforce the obligations of the Rulers and secure the welfare of the citizens of the States. The announcement of 1917 was to be made applicable to the Indian States and a Commission instituted to prevent the abuse of power by the Rules until the establishment of full responsible government.

The four parties interested in the decision of political issues were the British Government and the British People; Indians residing in British India; Princes; and the subject people in the States. The British Government and the Princes seemed to be interested in maintaining the *status quo*; Indians in British India had secured elementary constitutional concessions which they desired to enlarge while the people in the States were demanding responsible government for themselves as well as a fair share of voice in any future constitution for India. The Princes were disinclined to satisfy their subjects on these points even though Viscount Peel, in his speech in the House of Lords, reminded them of the need for raising the standard of administrative efficiency demanded by enlightened public opinion.

The people of Baroda, Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore and other States held a number of meetings to secure responsible government from their respective rulers with the approval of the British Government. The South Indian States Peoples' Conference met under the auspices of the Travancore State People's Committee at Trivandrum in 1929 under the presidentship of Sir M. Visvesvarayya. They felt compelled to come together, collect necessary funds and work under energetic leaders to secure their aims. In most States expenditure was incurred without a correct prespective of the wants of the people who, as tax payers, had the undoubted right to settle how the proceeds should be spent with collective advantage to themselves. People in the States were not being trained for high or responsible offices and this fact led to the creation of an official nobility newly recruited from outside the States who would naturally try to perpetuate themselves in authority. As Leslie Scott observed, the material resources in the States, though enormous, were not usefully employed as the Princes did not train their own people for fear of increasing their importance. When British India demanded a democratic form of government there was no reason why the people in the States

should not have a government approaching at least constitutional monarchy; by helping their subjects in their efforts at self-improvement, the Princes would be safeguarding the future interests of their own dynasties.

The Princes, it would appear, were ready to entertain the idea of federation as proposed in a Memorandum presented by the European Association of India to the Simon Commission. As the Nehru Committee observed,⁷ "An Indian federation, if it is to be a reality must not only define and regulate the relation between the Commonwealth and the States on a just and equitable footing but must also lay the foundations of a strong central authority and at the same time should give the fullest measure of freedom to each constituent unit to work out its own evolution."

Sir M. Visvesvarayya in his presidential address at Trivandrum demanded that the State Government should at least be a constitutional monarchy associated with representative institutions, and that the people in the States should have a voice in the finances, administration and legislation of the Central Government as far as they were paying taxes indirectly to the Government of India.⁸ It was criminal that material resources remained undeveloped and the brain power of the country was allowed to lie fallow, to the permanent injury of efficiency.

According to Sir M. Visvesvarayya, responsible government in a Princely State must be characterised by an elected Legislative Council and where the Legislature was unicameral there was to be a body of about twenty-five honorary advisers selected from among the leaders whom the Ruler might consult in emergencies in case the Legislature took up an attitude opposed to the primary interests of the State; the Ministry was to be chosen from among the Members of the Legislative Council and made responsible to it, the Chief Minister being acceptable to the Ruler; the Civil List of the Ruler should be permanently fixed, any extraordinary expenditure on his account being voted by the local Legislature; the judiciary should be independent of the executive and fundamental rights conceded to the citizens;" nation-building activities in respect of education,

7. Nehru Committee-Supplementary report.

8. At the time of Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, he was associated with a Committee of Princes and Ministers of Indian States in the discussion of the problem of the status of the States and it was then that he suggested, perhaps for the first time, the formation of a federal constitution for India.

9. Safety of person and property; right of association and meeting; freedom of speech; freedom of the press; etc

industries, defence and self-government should be made obligatory duties of each Princely State.

Sir M. Visvesvarayya envisaged a federal scheme for India including both Provinces and Princely States, the Federal Government having a responsible executive comprising twelve (maximum twenty) members; and there should be representatives from both Provinces and States in the bi-cameral Central Legislature.¹⁰ The Chamber of Princes would continue to represent the interests, dynastic claims and personal privileges of the Rulers and a committee of that body might discuss such questions with the Dominion Governor General's executive and in case of disagreement the questions might be referred for settlement to the British Government or to a sub-committee of their peers and representatives of the Government of India in equal proportion. It was not to be held obligatory for the States to introduce responsible government before they could send representatives to the Federal Legislature.

The British statesmen of course had advised the Princes in general terms to modernise their government but they could or did not expressly urge the introduction of responsible government in the States as they themselves had no conception yet of a complete form of such government for British India. The Princes, in their own interest, must adjust their position to the changed times; the

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10. It was suggested that the representatives from the States should abstain from voting in respect of questions pertaining purely to the Provinces. There are analogies to commend such a provision. Thus the House of Representatives in the U. S. A. admits a delegate from each Organised Territory; the delegates from such Territories have the right to speak on any subject and make motions but not to vote. Similarly the Northern Territory in the Australian Commonwealth elects a member who is not entitled to vote but can take part in any debate in the House.

States, the Rulers of which were entitled to representation in the Chamber of Princes, should have the right to send elected representatives to the Federal Government. As regards smaller States, an arrangement might be made under which the Provincial Governors, as in the past, would exercise the necessary control on behalf of the Central Government. For purposes of representation in the Federal Legislature these states might be grouped together and representatives elected from the groups on population or some other basis.

If, on the score of treaty rights or privileges, the Prince was unwilling to depute representatives to the Federal Legislature, the seats might be kept vacant, suggested Sir Visvesvarayya, until the State authorities or people would, on their own initiative, claim representation.

rigidity of British control over the Indian States had been considerably relaxed after 1908 and it was but right that the Princes should seek to share their measure of freedom with their own subjects. In granting responsible government in the Provinces the British Government themselves were parting with some of their powers and it was incumbent on the Princes also to part with some of their own prerogatives and thus facilitate the moral and material advancement of their States. Prudence also would dictate such a policy for, on the Provinces becoming autonomous, the people in the States could not be expected to remain content with any absolutist form of monarchy. After all, the strength of the Prince was the strength of the people.

British vested interests in India could be safe-guarded by guaranteeing a reasonable measure of employment to persons of British nationality and protection to British-controlled industries and trade so far as they did not come in the way of the Dominion's autonomy or its nation building activities. Thus the resources of the land could be well developed, racial ill-feeling rooted out and permanent co-operation based on enlightened self-interest guaranteed between India and England.

Sir M. Visvesvarayya pleaded for a Round Table Conference to lay down a scheme that would stand the test of time and provide for a federal union of Provinces and States, the establishment of responsible government in the States within a reasonable period, and adequate guarantees not only for British vested interests but also for the maintenance of the rights and privileges of the Princes. After drafting the outline of a constitution, a Commission composed of a majority of Indians might later be appointed to elaborate the details¹¹ and the new Dominion Government started on its career within one year of the appointment of such a Commission.

It was true that there was political awakening in the States but clearly their objectives were not to be gained unless a majority of them united in bringing pressure on the British Government. The people in British India, who were doing pioneering work, could not be expected to champion the cause of the Princely States as they needed all their energy and resources to safeguard their immediate interests. It was also of no use for the people in the States to get impatient with the Nehru Committee Report conceived, as it

11. This Dominion Preparations Commission would prepare proposals for new Departments and new procedures and should be maintained, he suggested, for five (to ten) years until the structure of government was transformed in essentials into the Dominion form and the old order changed into the new.

was on just lines; the Committee was not unwilling to admit Indian States into the Indian Federation though at the same time they did not wish to associate themselves too closely their "poorer relations," the subjects of the States, lest they should introduce complications and create obstacles in the way of achieving their own ends. Evidently the people in the States had begun to distrust the British Government and get impatient regarding the constitutional reforms in instalments. Constitutional Reform being an organic whole, the prescription of stages would only mean the prolongation of the agony for years.

The Butler Committee, it was clear from their report, tried to create a "Chinese Wall," as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru put it, between British India and the Indian States and proved themselves bankrupt of statesmanship. Their recommendation was the separation of the Political Department from the Foreign Department. Paramountcy, they said, must fulfil its obligations, defining or adapting itself "according to the shifting necessities of the time and the progressive development of the States," and the relations of the States should not without their consent be handed over to a responsible Indian Government.

The Committee's recommendations were bound to be unpopular with the Princes as they were to the effect that no definite rules could be laid down regarding sovereignty and that the detailed working of the policy of intervention and correction should be left entirely to the discretion of the Viceroy and the Political Department. Financially the recommendations brought no material benefit to the States so far as their claims conceded would be more than counter-balanced by the contributions to be made by them for the up-keep of the army. The system of tributes also was to be continued for the maintenance of the Political Department.

The Committee seemed to be concerned with the records of treaty rights and States' finances; but there was no evidence of their concern for the needs of nearly seventy million people whose welfare through good government should have been their main concern. There was "no open dealing, no largeness, no magnanimity, no feature of generous treatment" in their proceedings.¹²

12. Sir M. Visvesvarayya's presidential address at the South Indian States Peoples' Conference, 1929.

CHAPTER 16

TRAVANCORE, COCHIN AND INDIAN FEDERATION

The result of the First Round Table Conference was, as we know, the spread of the idea of an All-India Federation in which the States and the Provinces would be partners. The Madras States were being represented by Sir Mirza Ismail assisted by his Adviser, Dewan Bahadur T. Raghaviah.¹ The Maharani Regent of Travancore subsequently tried to get separate representation for her State at the second Round Table Conference. This was not agreed to by the Government of India who however suggested that a separate delegate might attend the conference representing the Madras States.² Mr. Raghaviah had personal knowledge of the conditions in Travancore but not of those in Cochin and, to that extent, the interests of the latter might suffer for want of adequate representation. Three alternatives were now open to the Government of Cochin. In the first instance, the arrangement at the time of the first Round Table Conference might be continued. Its defect was that Sir Mirza Ismail would have to depend entirely on Mr. Raghaviah who could as well represent the interests of the Madras States directly. Secondly the Government of Cochin could have agreed to the appointment of Mr. Raghaviah as a representative of the Madras States. Thirdly, Sir Mirza Ismail could have continued to represent the Madras States though Cochin might send a separate Adviser to safeguard her interests. Mr. Herbert, Dewan of Cochin, felt however that it would be of advantage to send Mr. Raghaviah as a representative of the States as a body so far as Cochin and Travancore had almost similar interests in regard to customs, ports and navigable waterways; after all, the final arrangement could be reached only between the Governor-General and each individual State. The expenditure also would not exceed that involved in sending Mr. Raghaviah as an Adviser to Sir Mirza Ismail.

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1. D. O. C. 41/31 dated 25 May, 1931 from the Agent to the Governor-General to the Dewan of Cochin.
 2. From the Dewan of Cochin to the Maharaja D. O. No. 306-27/1106 dated 13 June 1931.

The Maharaja of Cochin agreed to the Dewan's proposal. Mr. Raghaviah was chosen to represent the Madras States³ and Mr. Rama Varma Tamburan, Secretary to the Dewan, was to be his Secretary in England. The Dewan conveyed to Mr. Raghaviah the views of the Government of Cochin on some of the problems of federal organisation likely to be discussed at the second Round Table Conference.⁴

The Conference began its session in November, 1931. It appointed the Federal Structure Committee, a Sub-Committee of which was formed under Lord Peel's chairmanship to study the problem of federal finance. Mr. Raghaviah reported from London⁵ that certain proposals, desirable from the view-point of the States, would be discussed at the Conference, to increase the strength of both the Houses of Federal Legislature. He was of the opinion that an impartial Tribunal must be set up to settle the question of distribution of seats among the States because adequate representation in both the Chambers should be the condition precedent to their accession to the federation. Federal finance would be mainly based on indirect taxation and cash contributions from the States and Provinces. Cash contribution was only another name for State tribute and it was proposed to be retained, subject to a maximum of five per cent of gross revenue of the State concerned. The Government of Cochin was particularly interested in customs revenue as it was bound to increase with the growth of the Cochin Port and so they could not agree to any deviation from the Inter-Portal Trade Convention of 1865 as modified by the Four Party Agreement of 1925. They also

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3. The sanction of the Government of India also was obtained. See the Agent's letter dated 8 August, 1931. D. O. C. 41/30.
 4. From Herbert to Raghaviah, dated 23 September, 1931. The Ministers of the Indian States Delegation had agreed that in the Federal Upper House there should be not more than 250 Members and in the Lower House, not more than 350 Members. Mr. Herbert desired that these numbers must be increased by fifty per cent. He also wanted Mr. Raghaviah to insist that the proportion of the States' representatives to those of British India should be 50:50 in the Upper House and 40:60 in the Lower House. As regards the Lower House, the Cochin State Legislature could elect a panel of six persons from among whom the Maharaja would select the representatives for the State. If for any reason Cochin would not secure representation in the Upper House the State representatives to be sent to the Lower House would be nominated by the Government. The most satisfactory basis for the distribution of seats in the Legislature would be either population or population and revenue.
 5. Cable from Raghaviah at London, dated 4 November 1931.

did not like to give up the Cochin Railway as the rail traffic was likely to increase with the development of the Cochin Port.⁶

Though the recommendations of the Peel Committee were generally acceptable the Governments of Travancore and Cochin could not agree to their proposal to include Corporation Tax and Tax on Commercial Stamps as part of federal finance. The recommendations of the Peel Committee were further examined by the Federal Finance Committee under Lord Percy. The position of Cochin was left for elaborate consideration at the third Round Table Conference. Anyway the interests of Cochin were well represented by Mr. Raghaviah.

As a result of the second Round Table Conference the Indian States Enquiry Committee (Financial) was constituted. They visited India and in response to their query Mr. Herbert on behalf of Cochin, submitted a Memorandum to them on 1 February, 1932,⁷ in order to facilitate a correct understanding of the circumstances under which cash contributions had been paid by the Government of Cochin and immunities had been enjoyed by them in respect of customs and salt. The cash contribution to the British Indian Government amounted to Rs. 2,00,000 annually; one lakh being paid as compensation for the help given by the English East India Company in regard to the recovery of Cochin territory from Tipu and the balance being contributed towards military expenditure.⁸

6. Letter from Herbert to the Maharaja dated 8 November 1931.

7. Letter from Herbert to the Committee No. 306/1105 dated 1 February, 1932.

8. In 1790 the Raja of Cochin had sought the aid of the English East India Company and according to the Treaty concluded during the next year the Company's forces would help him to recover the territories wrested from him by Tipu. The Raja would thereupon pay the Government of Madras a tribute of Rs. 70,000 in the first year, Rs. 80,000 and Rs. 90,000 in the second and third years respectively and Rs. 1,00,000 annually thereafter. It would appear that the company did not carry out the terms of the Treaty entirely and in fairness to the Raja he was entitled to a reduction in the tribute in proportion to the territories he could not recover. The Government of Cochin therefore felt that as the Raja had been paying the full amount for benefits he never got, he was entitled to request the entire remission of the annual payment.

The balance of the annual contribution was the result of the events of 1808 when Velu Thampi and Paliath Achan had planned to drive out the English with French assistance. The Raja, opposed to the scheme was persuaded to retire to Vellarapilli and the attack was made on 18 December, 1808. But the British Resident escaped and the insurrection on the whole failed. These events led to the Treaty signed on 6 May,

The Government of Cochin had been enjoying certain privileges and immunities in respect of salt and customs. As noted earlier, the revenue derived by them was on the basis of two Agreements, the Inter-Portal Agreement of 1865 between the British Government and the Governments of Cochin and Travancore and the Four-Party Agreement made in 1925 by the Government of India, the Government of Madras and those of Cochin and Travancore.⁹ The Inter-Portal Agreement had effected important changes in the regulation of the revenue from customs and salt which continued with some modifications. It established freedom of trade between British India and Cochin in all articles except salt, opium and country spirits¹⁰ and also assimilated the rates of customs duty and tariff valuations in the State to those of British India.¹¹ As compensation for the loss that the State

1809 under which the Raja had to pay, besides the usual subsidy, a sum equal to the expense of one battalion of native infantry. Finally the total amount payable every year was fixed at Rs. 2,00,000 in 1819.

The second payment was not a contribution towards the general military expenditure but in consideration of the Company's specific undertaking to defend the territory of Cochin. British Indian troops were stationed in Cochin, for several years but their number was progressively reduced until in 1900, they were entirely withdrawn. They were never replaced afterwards. The defence of Cochin evidently ceased to be a military problem under the changed conditions. In this case also, the contention of the Government of Cochin was that they should not be called upon to make any further payment in future.

9. During the Portuguese and the Dutch periods and in the early period of the English East India Company, the Government of Cochin used to receive a moiety of customs revenue realised by those Powers at the Cochin Port. Later the East India Company ceased to make the payment until it was revived by the Inter-Portal agreement of 1865 as compensation for certain concessions made by the Government of Cochin. In addition to the share of revenue thus received the Government had on the sea and land frontiers their own customs houses. Thus duties were realised on foreign goods imported or exported through the ports of Malipuram, Narakal and Cranganore. As the duties were comparatively lower the profit was not inconsiderable. Salt, pepper, tobacco and intoxicants were State monopolies. There was much smuggling of tobacco into Cochin. As the price of salt in the State was lower than in British India, it was being smuggled from the former into the latter. The import duties on the goods from abroad were low, and so they were imported at one of the State ports and then smuggled into British India. After much correspondence extending over nearly eleven years the Inter-Portal Agreement was concluded in 1865.

10. Article 1, Inter-Portal Agreement.

11. Articles 3, 4, 5, *Ibid.*

was likely to incur, the Government of India had given to the Government of Cochin the right to a moiety of net customs revenue realised at British Cochin on all goods except tobacco, pepper, salt and opium; the right to a guaranteed customs revenue of Rs. 1,00,000 exclusive of the amount collected on foreign tobacco and pepper; and also a guarantee of a revenue of Rs. 1,05,000 from the import duty on foreign tobacco. Among these three, the second privilege had already ceased to confer any benefit on the State.

The above facts were placed before the Committee¹² who visited the State and discussed them with Mr. Herbert, Dewan, on¹¹ and 16 February 1932. If the cash contribution payable by Cochin were to be abolished a way had to be found regarding the State's financing of the Federal Government on some basis common to all federating units. It was impracticable that the Government of Cochin should agree to stabilise their revenues from salt and customs in view of the growth of population and the increase of expenditure. The problem was whether the customs revenue could be commuted on the basis of existing figures, in which case the Government of Cochin could reasonably claim to be relieved of any responsibility for finding the necessary capital to push through the fourth stage of the Cochin Port.

It was practically obvious that Cochin would have to join the federation as otherwise the Federal Government, commanding vast resources would be able to bring pressure on the State in various ways. Mr. Herbert advised the Maharaja to join the federation on satisfactory terms and contribute to the federal revenues.¹³

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12. The Rt. Honourable J. C. C. Davidson was the Chairman of the Committee. Those who came to Cochin included Lord and Lady Hastings, Sir Charles Stuart Williams, Mr. Martin and the two Secretaries, Mr. Fitze and Mr. Patrick. The remaining members, Sir Reginald Glancy, Sir Maurice Gwyer and Sir Robert Hutchinson could not come to the west coast as they were ill. Owing to the demise of the ex-Maharaja public entertainments were impossible, yet the members enjoyed their visit to Cochin. It is said that at Trichur and Ernakulam there were some black flag demonstrations.

The Dewan was accompanied, at the meeting on 11 February by Mr. Aravindaksha Menon and at that on 16 February by Mr. Kandar Menon. Mr. Davidson did not hesitate to point out that the payments under the Treaty of 1791 had been continued without any objection and that under the Treaty of 1809 the Raja had agreed to pay a sum in addition "to the usual subsidy" of one lakh, thus tacitly admitting his liability to pay the just contribution though he had not got back all the territories.

13. Note from Herbert to the Maharaja, dated 27 February 1932.

In April, 1932 the Government of Cochin informed the Indian States Enquiry Committee that "it has with reluctance come to the conclusion that it is impossible for it to accept a fixed compensation in lieu of the share of the customs revenue realised at the Port of Cochin which it now enjoys."¹⁴ As regards the revenue derived from salt, a flexible source, the Government expressed their willingness to consider an offer of compensation for giving it up, a compensation in the form of an annual subsidy "based on the revenue derived by the Darbar from the commodity during the current year."¹⁵

The Viceroy convened¹⁶ a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes and certain other States' representatives at Simla on 20 September, 1932 in order to discuss problems connected with federation. Mr. Herbert attended it, representing Cochin. Before the meeting the Princes and Ministers representing the States held informal conferences to reach maximum agreement among themselves regarding federal finance, the allocation of seats and the question of Paramountcy but they could not reach any definite conclusion.¹⁷

The Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes agreed to the principle that the controlling authority in regard to federal subjects would be the Federal Government in which the interests of all the federating States would be represented. The existing Treaties and Engagements should be properly revised and the Rulers concerned must voluntarily subscribe to the modifications effected, providing for the change in the functions of the Crown. As regards the financial aspects of the federation, the Maharaja of Rewa advocated the adoption of one of the three courses: that the States might be given a mandate to secure the best possible terms at the Round Table Conference; that a meeting of the Ministers might be convened to formulate a definite and detailed financial scheme; that the entry of the States into the federation might be postponed until such a scheme had been worked out.

Anyway Mr. Herbert attended the third session of the Round Table Conference at London in November and December, 1932. There were differences of opinion among the States' representatives themselves on the important issue of the size of the two Chambers of Federal Legislature.¹⁸ The Franchise Committee presided over

14. Note from Herbert to the Committee dated 20 April, 1932.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Letter from the Viceroy to the Maharaja dated 6 September, 1932.

17. Notes from Herbert to the Maharaja dated 19 and 21 September 1932.

18. Note from Herbert to the Maharaja, dated 6 March, 1933.

by Lord Lothian had recommended that the number of British Indian seats in the Lower House should be increased to 300. The States were indifferent to this issue provided the percentage of $33\frac{1}{3}$ was preserved for their benefit; the difference of opinion was in regard to the percentage of seats in each House that should be allotted to the States.¹⁹ No agreement was reached on the question which was left to be considered by the Select Committee at the time of the drafting of the Bill.

A Special Sub-Committee had been constituted at the Round Table Conference to study the legislative relations between the centre and the units. The representatives of the States on the Sub-Committee pointed out that the States might not "cede plenary powers of legislation in regard to all subjects classified in the appendices of the Federal Structure Committee's report as federal," and that they proposed to concede only "certain powers on these subjects and to retain the remainder for themselves." The proposal, if approved, would result in the Federal Government having different powers in the States and in the Provinces in regard to federal

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19. The Chamber of Princes had insisted that the States should have not less than 50 per cent of the seats in the Upper House and $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent in the Lower House. This principle was binding on the representatives of the States, the Rulers of which were on the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes. Those coming from Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur did not like to press this point so far as many States had agreed, at the second session of the Round Table Conference, to the principle that the States might be given 40 per cent of the seats in the Upper House and $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent in the Lower House. Mr. Herbert felt that any attempt to obtain more than 40 per cent of the seats in the Upper House would meet with failure. Anyway the demand of the Chamber of Princes was naturally opposed by all delegates from British India. The desire for a larger number of seats in the Upper House and for a larger Upper House emanated from those States that had individual representation in the Chamber of Princes. In fact if the Upper House were to become larger the States would have to find more supporters to get a majority on any question in which they were interested. It was also probable that "the larger the Upper House becomes the less conservative is likely to be its outlook and the less likely is it to act as a check on the Lower House". (Herbert's note, 6 March 1933). Moreover, the proportion of the States' seats in both the Houses had been fixed on the assumption that all the States would join the federation. If only a few States would join, British India would certainly object to their being assigned the seats originally allotted to all. A State, once assigned a seat at the beginning of the federation might not be willing to resign it in favour of another joining the Union subsequently.

subjects. The Special Committee was inclined to enumerate all federal subjects in the Act and leave any derogation from the Federal Government's authority in regard to such subjects in the States to be defined in the States' Instruments of Accession. An important section among them was opposed to the residuary powers being vested in the Provinces. They also thought that there should be a common field in which both the centre and the units should have legislative power so far as legislative uniformity was desirable throughout the country in regard to certain subjects that might be allotted to the units. It was thus that a Concurrent list also came to be prepared, apart from the Federal and Provincial Lists. The conclusions of the Special Committee were generally adopted by the Conference.

As regards the administrative relations between the centre and the federating States, it was agreed that the State Government should be obliged to exercise their executive power to secure due effect within their territory to every Act of the Federal Legislature. It was also agreed that the power to issue general instructions to the State Governments should be vested in the Governor-General personally and that arrangements should be made for the administration of federal subjects by the States on behalf of the Federal Government, through the agency of their own staff. The Governor-General would satisfy himself by inspection or otherwise that adequate standard was being maintained.

It was generally accepted that the protection of the rights of the States was the special responsibility of the Governor-General.

After his return from London, Mr. Herbert attended a conference convened by the Viceroy at New Delhi on 14 March 1933. The Viceroy stated at the conference that it was decided to have not more than 260 seats in the Federal Upper Chamber, of which 150 seats would be allotted to the British Indian Provinces and 100 seats to the States while ten seats would be filled through nomination by the Governor-General; the Lower House would have 375 Members, including 125 Members from the States and 250 Members from the Provinces. The seats in the Upper House would be allotted to the States according to their importance²⁰ and those in the Lower House

20. Hyderabad, on account of its special position, would get two or three seats more than any other State. All other twenty-one-gun States would get three seats each; all nineteen-gun States and certain seventeen-gun States would be given two seats each. The remaining seventeen-gun States and 25 other States would get one seat each. The remaining seats would be allotted to the other States and filled by some system of grouping. (See Herbert's Letter to the Maharaja, dated 25 March 1933).

allotted on the basis of population. On the whole the Viceregal announcement regarding the allocation of seats was not received with enthusiasm by the members present.

The White Paper was finally issued and the constitution of a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee announced. The White Paper raised "several general questions of vital importance to Cochin" and the necessity to give evidence before the Committee became imperative.²¹ Two such questions were the proposed assignment of the entire proceeds of the maritime customs to the Federal Government and the inclusion, in Federal List, of the management of major ports. Much of the Cochin Port area was within the State and the share of maritime customs received by the Government formed an essential part of the State revenue.

The next reference received was when the Indian Constitution Bill was at the Committee stage in 1935 and the considered comments of the States were invited so as to reach the Secretary of State through the proper channel before 15 February.²² But it was not found possible to send up the views of the Government of Cochin within the stipulated time.²³ The Draft Instrument of Accession also was received. At this stage Mr. Herbert reverted to the British service.

It would appear that in the winter of 1936 elaborate discussions were held between the States' representatives and the Viceroy's special representatives regarding the terms to which the accession of the States to the federation would be subject. The States had brought forward unmerous important issues of great "complexity calling for careful consideration."²⁴ In January, 1939 the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow indicated the terms that should be included in the Instruments of Accession to be signed by the States but even at that time the terms concerning Cochin were not complete "in respect of the form and extent of accession on customs and other connected entries of the Federal Legislative List." The "question," he added, "of resolving the existing position in respect of customs in Your Highness' State to one compatible with accession to the federation and of formulating in accordance therewith the exact terms of accession on the relevant entries of the federal legislative list will be dealt with separately." The Viceroy made it clear that the terms on all essentials would be incapable of further relaxation since they represented

21. Herbert's letter to the Agent to the Governor-General.

22. Letter from the Agent to the Governor-General dated 2 February 1935.

23. Letter to the Agent to the Governor-General, P.3-9621/1110 dated 10 September 1935.

24. Letter to the Maharaja from Lord Linlithgow, dated 27 January 1939.

the furthest point upto which the British Government was prepared to go to meet the wishes or apprehensions expressed by the States. Accession to any substantially less degree could not, according to the British Government, be sufficient qualification to entitle a State to become a unit and enjoy the benefits of membership of the federation contemplated by the Act. The Viceroy expected the Maharaja to inform him within six months whether he would be ready to execute the Instrument of Accession within the terms indicated.

As regards Travancore, after the second Round Table Conference enquiries were started regarding the State's position in the commonwealth of Provinces and States in the new constitutional set-up. The Indian States Committee under the chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. J. C. C. Davidson²⁵ visited Travancore in February, 1932 and held many conferences with the Dewan and Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer "to explore more fully the specific financial problems arising in connection with certain individual States." Travancore presented her demands in a Memorandum which received the attention of the Committee.²⁶

In 1936 the Viceroy took steps to put the federal part of the Act of 1935 into operation and forwarded the Draft Instruments of Accession to the States. In this connection Mr. A. C. Lothian, Mr. A.J. Raisman and Mr. E. Conran Smith visited Travancore among other States to explain the implications of the various clauses and the limitations and conditions regarding the Federal List of subjects. The Dewan, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, presented²⁷ a Memorandum to them, containing Travancore's claims. The right of the State to retain executive authority even in subjects with regard to which Travancore might accede was emphasised. He demanded special treatment for Travancore in respect of the nature and origin of her unique rights concerning salt and customs. He referred to the retention of internal customs, excise and export as the compensation amount payable to her under the Inter-Portal Convention. If the Government of India were not to recognise her claims to a revision

25. Mr. K. S. Fitze and Mr. P. J. Patrick were the Secretaries of the Committee.

26. Travancore demanded the revision of the amount of compensation payable under the Inter-Portal Agreement of 1865 and an examination of the nature and extent of the immunities and privileges enjoyed by her in respect of customs, salt, tobacco, post and coinage as well as that of the origin of the cash contribution paid by the State to the British Government. There was also a discussion on the isolated pockets under British occupation in the State, like Anjengo.

27. The Dewan was assisted by Dr. N. Kunjan Pillai, Chief Secretary to Government and Mr. G. Parameswaran Pillai, Federation Special Officer.

of the compensation amount, she might have to sacrifice permanently the bulk of her customs revenue for the benefit of the Federal Government. Another question raised by the Dewan was the remission of the annual cash contribution of about eight lakhs of rupees on the ground that in a federal set-up no component units, could on principle, hold a "subordinate status involving an obligation to pay any subsidy to the Central Government" and that the payments made were in *lieu* of certain obligations for defence under conditions that had ceased to exist much earlier. The Dewan pressed, as a matter of prestige, the demand for the recognition of the Travancore High Court as a High Court for purposes of section 217 of the Government of India Act, 1935. The Government of Travancore expressed, in their Memorandum, their views on the various items in the Federal list.

The negotiations went on in a protracted manner. But the subsequent change in world politics and the outbreak of the Second World War stood in the way of the consummation of the federal scheme.

CHAPTER 17

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SALT SATYAGRAHA

Having reviewed in the two previous chapters the political issues concerning the subjects of Princely States including Travancore and Cochin and the constitutional problems in relation to the formation of an all-India federation which the two States had to face, we shall in this chapter turn our attention to the political developments in Malabar in the wake of the famous Salt Satyagraha.

The Congress session at Lahore gave a new impetus to the freedom movement in India. The Independence Resolution made the goal of the Congress clear to the people. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observes in his *Autobiography*,¹ "Events followed then in quick succession, like a drama working up to its climax." With the inauguration of the Civil Disobedience Movement under Gandhiji's leadership, the year 1930 proved to be one of the most eventful years. "a wonder year" in the history of the country.

Work started all over Malabar in right earnest. It was decided to enrol members in the Congress and organise Congress Committees throughout the land. In pursuance of the Lahore resolution, Mr. K. Madhavan Nair resigned his seat in the Madras Legislative Council.

On 26 January 1930 the whole of Kerala observed the first Independence Day enthusiastically with processions and public meetings at which thousands, in all solemnity, took the Pledge of Independence noted below:—

We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruit of their toil and have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe therefore that India must sever the British connection and attain *purna swaraj* or complete independence.

India has been ruined economically. The revenue derived from our people is out of all proportion to our income. Our average income is seven pice (less than two pence) per day and of

1. Chapter XXIX, p. 209.

the heavy taxes we pay, twenty per cent are raised from the land revenue derived from the peasantry and three per cent from the salt tax, which falls most heavily on the poor.

Village industries such as hand spinning, had been destroyed leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the crafts thus destroyed.

Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to heap further burdens on the peasantry. British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufacturers, and revenue from them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. Still more arbitrary has been the manipulation of the exchange ratio which has resulted in millions being drained away from the country.

Politically, India's status has never been so reduced as under the British regime. No reforms have given real political power to the people. The tallest of us have to bend before foreign authority. The rights of free expression of opinion and free association have been denied to us and many of our countrymen are compelled to live in exile abroad and cannot return to their homes. All administrative talent is killed and the masses have to be satisfied with petty village offices and clerkships.

Culturally, the system of education had torn us from our moorings and our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us.

Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly and the presence of an alien army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign aggression, or even defend our homes and families from the attacks of thieves, robbers and miscreants.

We hold it to be a crime against man and god to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country. We recognise, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will therefore prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence even under provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured. We

therefore hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing *purna swaraj*.

The Congress Working Committee, meeting at Ahmedabad on 15 February 1930, resolved to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement for the attainment of the goal of independence and authorised Gandhiji and others to whom non-violence was an article of faith, to do so as and when they thought it fit. Gandhiji wanted to break the Government monopoly of salt, a commodity useful to all, from the highest to the lowest.

Before starting the movement, Gandhiji tried to explore all avenues of peace through negotiation. Very early in March 1930 he sent a letter to Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, through Mr. Reginald Reynolds, a young Englishman. A document of great importance in the history of the freedom struggle, the letter set forth in clear terms how the evils of British imperialism had caused the ruin of the country. It also expounded the true meaning of independence in terms of India's teeming millions. Gandhiji wrote:

Dear friend,

Before embarking on Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out.

My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India.

I must not be misunderstood. Though I hold the British rule in India to be a curse I do not, therefore, consider Englishmen in general to be worse than any other people on earth. I have the privilege of claiming many Englishmen as dearest friends. Indeed much that I have learnt of the evil of British rule is due to the writings of frank and courageous Englishmen who have not hesitated to tell the unpalatable truth about the rule.

And why do I regard the British rule as a curse?

It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford.

It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture. And, by the policy of disarmament,

it has degraded us spiritually. Lacking the inward strength we have been reduced, by all but universal disarmament, to a state bordering on cowardly helplessness.

In common with many of my countrymen, I had hugged the fond hope that the proposed Round Table Conference might furnish a solution. But, when you said plainly that you could not give any assurance that you or the British cabinet would pledge yourselves to support a scheme of full Dominion Status, the Round Table Conference could not possibly furnish the solution for which vocal India is consciously, and the dumb millions are unconsciously, thirsting. Needless to say, there never was any question of Parliament's verdict being anticipated. Instances are not wanting, of the British Cabinet, in anticipation of the parliamentary verdict, having pledged itself to a particular policy.

The Delhi interview having miscarried, there was no option for Pandit Motilal Nehru and me but to take steps to carry out the solemn resolution of the Congress arrived at in Calcutta at its session in 1928.

But the resolution of independence should cause no alarm, if the word Dominion Status mentioned in your announcement had been used in its accepted sense. For, has it not been admitted by responsible British statesmen, that Dominion Status is virtual independence? What however, I fear, is that there never has been any intention of granting such Dominion Status to India in the immediate future.

But this is all past history. Since the announcement many events have happened which show unmistakably the trend of British policy.

It seems as clear as day-light that responsible British statesmen do not contemplate any alteration in British policy that might adversely affect Britain's commerce with India or require an impartial and close scrutiny of Britain's transactions with India. If nothing is done to end the process of exploitation India must be held with an ever-increasing speed. The Finance Member regards as a settled fact the 1/6 ratio which, by a stroke of the pen, drains India of a few crores. And when a serious attempt is being made through a civil form of direct action, to unsettle this fact, among many others, even you cannot help appealing to the wealthy landed classes to help you to crush that attempt in the name of an order that grinds India to atoms.

Unless those who work in the name of the nation understand and keep before all concerned, the motive that lies

behind the craving for independence, there is every danger of independence itself coming to us so changed as to be of no value to those toiling voiceless millions for whom it is sought and for whom it is worth taking. It is for that reason that I have been recently telling the public what independence should really mean.

Let me put before you some of the salient points. The terrific pressure of land revenue, which furnishes a large part of the total must undergo considerable modification in an independent India. Even the much vaunted permanent settlement benefits the few rich Zamindars, not the ryots. The ryot has remained as helpless as ever. He is a mere tenant at will. Not only, then has the land revenue to be considerably reduced, but the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the ryot's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him if only because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man both individually and collectively. The drink and drug revenue, too, is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations, both of their health and morals. It is defended under the false plea of individual freedom, but in reality is maintained for its own sake. The ingenuity of the author of the Reforms of 1919 transferred this revenue to the so-called responsible part of Dyarchy, so as to throw the burden of prohibition on it, thus from the very beginning rendering it powerless for good. If the unhappy Minister wipes out this revenue he must starve education since in the existing circumstances he has no new source of replacing that revenue. If the weight of taxation has crushed the poor from above, the destruction of the central supplementary industry, i.e., hand spinning, has undermined their capacity for producing wealth.

The tale of India's ruination is not complete without reference to the liabilities incurred in her name. Sufficient has been recently said about these in the public press. It must be the duty of a free India to subject all the liabilities to the strictest investigation, and repudiate those that may be adjudged by an impartial tribunal to be unjust and unfair.

The inequities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world. Take your own salary. It is over Rs 21,000 per month, besides many other indirect additions. The British Prime Minister gets £ 5,000 per year i.e., over Rs 5,400 per month

at the present rate of exchange. You are getting over Rs. 70-0 per day as against India's average income of less than two annas per day. The Prime Minister gets Rs. 180 per day against Britain's average income of Rs. 2 per day. Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain's average income. On bended knee I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon. I have taken a personal illustration to drive home a painful truth. I have too great a regard for you as a man to wish to hurt your feelings. I know that you do not need the salary you get. Probably the whole of your salary goes for charity. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped. What is true of the Viceregal salary is true generally of the whole administration.

A radical cutting down of the revenue, therefore depends upon an equally radical reduction in the expenses of the administration. This means a transformation of the scheme of government. This transformation is impossible without independence. Hence, in my opinion the spontaneous demonstration of 26 January, in which hundreds of thousands of villagers instinctively participated. To them independence means deliverance from the killing weight.

Not one of the great British Political Parties, it seems to me, is prepared to give up the Indian spoils to which great Britain helps herself from day to day, often, in spite of the unanimous opposition of Indian opinion.

Nevertheless, if India is to live as a nation, if the slow death by starvation of her people is to stop, some remedy must be found for immediate relief. The proposed conference is certainly not the remedy. It is not a matter of carrying conviction by argument. The matter resolves itself into one of matching forces. Conviction or no conviction, Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interests by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death.

It is common cause that, however disorganised, and for the time being, insignificant it may be, the party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt. Its end is the same as mine. But I am convinced that it cannot bring the desired relief to the dumb millions. And the conviction is growing deeper and deeper in me that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organised violence of the British Government. Many think that non-violence is not active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force as well against the organised

violent forces of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned. Having an unquestioning and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence, as I know it, it would be sinful on my part to wait any longer.

This non-violence will be expressed through Civil Disobedience, for the moment confined to the inmates of the Satyagraha Ashram, but ultimately designed to cover all those who choose to join the movement with its obvious limitations.

I know that in embarking on non-violence I shall be running what might fairly be termed a mad risk. But the victories of Truth have never been won without risks, often of the gravest character. Conversion of a nation that has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another, far more numerous, far more ancient and no less cultured than itself is worth any amount of risk. I have deliberately used the word, conversion. For my ambition is no less than to convert the British people through non-violence and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India.

I do not see to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own. I believe that I have always served them. I served them up to 1919 blindly. But when my eyes were opened and I conceived non-co-operation, the object still was to serve them. I employed the same weapon that I have in all humility successfully used against the dearest members of my family. If I have equal love for your people with mine it will not long remain hidden. It will be acknowledged by them even as the members of my family acknowledged it after they had tried me for several years. If the people join me as I expect they will, the sufferings they will undergo, unless the British nation sooner retraces its steps, will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts.

The plan through Civil Disobedience will be to combat such evils as I have sampled out. If we want to sever the British connection it is because of such evils. When they are removed the path becomes easy. Then the way to friendly negotiation will be open. If the British commerce with India is purified of greed, you will have no difficulty in recognising our independence. I respectfully invite you then to pave the way for a conference between equals interested only in promoting the common good of mankind through voluntary fellowship and in arranging terms of mutual help and commerce equally suited

to both. You have unnecessarily laid stress upon the communal problems that unhappily affect this land. Important, though they undoubtedly are, for the consideration of any scheme of government, they have little bearing on the greater problems which are above communities and which affect them all equally. But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the 11th day of this month, I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take to disregard the provisions of the Salt Law. I regard this tax to be the most iniquitous of all, from the poor man's stand-point. As the independence movement is essential for the poorest in the land the beginning will be made with this evil. The wonder is that we have submitted to the cruel monopoly for so long. It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready, in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me, and, in the act of disobeying the Salt Act to lay themselves open to the penalties of a law that should never have disfigured the Statute Book.

I have no desire to cause you unnecessary embarrassment or any at all, so far as I can help. If you think that there is any substance in my letter and if you will care to discuss matters with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you. You will, however, do me the favour not to deflect me from my course unless you can see your way to conform to the substance of this letter.

This letter is not in any way intended as a threat but is a simple and sacred duty peremptory on a civil resister. Therefore I am having it specially delivered by a young English friend who believes in the Indian cause and is a full believer in non-violence and whom Providence seems to have sent to me, as it were, for the very purpose".

On receipt of this letter, the Viceroy expressed his regret that Gandhiji should be "contemplating a course of action which is clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace." As Gandhiji later commented, "On bended knees I asked for bread but I have received stone instead."

The Government of India decided to counteract the contemplated Civil Disobedience Movement. On 6 March 1930 the Home Secretary, Government of India, instructed all the Provincial Governments to intercept and censor the correspondence of the members of the Congress Working Committee, the Presidents of the Provincial

Committees and such other leaders connected with the Congress whose correspondence was likely to furnish important information to the Government regarding the ideas and plans of the organisers of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Accordingly the Provincial Governments, while instructing their officers, emphasised the necessity to avoid giving any plausible ground for the "enemies" of the Government to enlist public sympathy, the importance of tackling the leaders at an early stage and the desirability of leaving the rank and file alone as long as they would remain non-violent. The attempt to break the Salt Law might be met, according to them, at least in the early stages, by confiscating the illicit articles used for the manufacture of salt without the institution of any wholesale prosecution as it was not advisable to overcrowd the jails.

Disappointed, as he was with the Viceroy's reply, Gandhiji decided to break the Salt Law, having chosen Dandi, a village on the sea coast, about two hundred miles from Sabarmati Ashram, as the venue of his Satyagraha. At 6.30 a.m. on 12 March 1930 he started on his historic march with seventy-eight volunteers hailing from different Provinces including Kerala. It was the long trek of the political saint that convulsed a mighty empire and shook its foundations.^{1a} The All-India Congress Committee that met at Ahmedabad on 21 March ratified the Working Committee's decision to authorise the initiation of the Civil Disobedience Movement by Gandhiji. They authorised the Provincial Congress Committees to "organise and undertake such Civil Disobedience as to them may seem proper and in the manner that they may appear to them to be the most suitable." They also planned the further course of action in case of the arrest of the leaders. The President of the Congress was empowered to act on behalf of the Committee in case they could not meet; to nominate the members of the Working Committee in the place of those arrested, if any, and also to nominate his own successor with similar powers. The Provincial as well as the subordinate Congress Committees gave similar powers to their own Presidents.

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- 1a. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru remarked: "Today the pilgrim marches onward on his long trek. Staff in hand, he goes along the dusty roads of Gujarat, clear eyed and firm of step, with his faithful band trudging along behind him. Many a journey he has undertaken in the past, many a weary road traversed. But longer than any that have gone before, is this last journey of his, and many are the obstacles in his way. But the fire of a great resolve is in him and surpassing love of his miserable countrymen and love of Truth that scorches and love of freedom that inspires. And none that passes him can escape the spell and men of common clay feel the spark of life. It is a long journey for the goal is the independence of India and the ending of the exploitation of her millions." (Quoted in Tendulkar, Vol. III, page 31).

Gandhiji and his noble band of volunteers reached Dandi on 5 April after a triumphant march in the course of which every village gave them an affectionate and enthusiastic welcome. Next day, the first day of the National Week, Gandhiji violated the Salt Law and announced: "Now that the technical or ceremonial breach of the Salt Law has been committed it is now open to any one who would take the risk of prosecution under the Salt Law, to manufacture salt wherever he wishes and whenever it is convenient." This announcement was the signal for the nation to start the Satyagraha through "the war against the Salt Tax." "Let me distinguish" wrote Gandhiji at that time, "between the call of 1920 and the present call. The call of 1920 was a call for preparation, today it is a call for engaging in a final conflict."

Meanwhile the Government of Madras took measures to counter the Salt Satyagraha campaign as well as the propaganda to boycott foreign cloth. In a pamphlet issued by them,² they argued that the tax on salt payable by the people "is not heavy because it costs you less than a rupee every year" and that it "is not unjust because everybody ought to contribute to keep the country going." In another pamphlet (No. 672) they tried to show that if the trade in foreign cloth were to be stopped Indians would have to pay much more for "what cloth there is in India" because....."when an article becomes scarce its price begins to rise." Moreover "as there would be only one half of the total amount of cloth required many people would have to go without cloth altogether.....". Any boycott of the import and sale of foreign cloth implied, according to the Government of Madras, that many people would have to lose their means of support.

When the idea of independence first emerged in 1928 it was generally considered visionary and it did not seem likely to develop into a practical issue. But the Government soon realised³ that independence was no longer an academic ideal and that a party of men had emerged, small in number but active, to translate it into a definite policy.

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Badagara in North Malabar on 9 March 1930 and welcomed the launching of the

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2. The Government stated that Salt Tax was not their invention but had been mentioned in Hindu *shastras* and levied by the Mughal emperors. The British Government only accepted it as an existing source of revenue (Under Secretary's safe, No. 691, 1930).
 3. From Government of India to the Chief Secretary, Government of Madras, 21 February 1929. Under Secretary's Series, No. 613.

Civil Disobedience Movement. A Sub-Committee was appointed to organise effective propaganda in favour of the movement in Malabar.⁴ Applications began to pour into the office of the Provincial Congress Committee at Calicut for enrolment as volunteers, from men, young and old, from all parts of Malabar as well as from the Princely States of Cochin and Travancore.

Following the arrests of the great leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, J. M. Sen Gupta and others, the *Mathrubhumi* of Calicut⁵ wrote a stirring editorial, in its special number dated 18 March 1930, calling upon the people of Kerala to 'get ready.' In the same number Smt. T. C. Kochukutty Amma, of Cochin Educational Service, exhorted her sisters in Kerala through an article, to help the freedom movement, and take to the constructive programme outlined by Gandhiji. Mr. P. K. Dewar, Editor of the *Dharma Kabe'om*, published at Cochin, made a special appeal to the fishermen community, through a leading article in his paper, to break the Salt Law as salt was the most essential article to cure fish. The Kerala Yuvak Sangh, meeting on 30 March called upon the youth of Kerala to participate in the struggle. In spite of the new wave of enthusiasm, there were still many persons in Kerala who struck a discordant note⁶ or questioned the advisability of starting Satyagraha that might, as they feared, provoke the Muslims once again to create trouble.

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, resolved to send a batch of Satyagrahi volunteers from Calicut to Pavyannur, at the northern end of Malabar on 13 April 1930 to offer Salt Satyagraha. A Satyagraha Committee or War Council was formed on 3 April 1930 to be in charge of the organisation and control of the movement.

4. It included Messrs. K. Kelappan, Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, K. Madhavanar, Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar and P. K. Kunhisankara Menon.
5. The *Mathrubhumi* was a nationalist triweekly in Malayalam. It was converted into a daily from 6 April 1930 so that it might give detailed publicity to the events of the national struggle.
6. In March 1930 there was a meeting arranged under the auspices of the Satyagraha Committee at Purameri in North Malabar. An attempt was made ineffectively to disturb its proceedings. Five young students of the local Raja's High School enrolled themselves as volunteers on the spot. Smt. Devaki Kettilamma, a member of an aristocratic family at Purameri, made a donation to the Satyagraha Committee.

This action was widely welcomed. Several people now resigned their jobs and enrolled themselves as volunteers.⁷

The eventful day, 6th April, 1930, was the day as we noted, on which Gandhiji and his followers broke the Salt Law at Dandi and it was observed all over Kerala as a day of great national importance. Public meetings were held and there were big bonfires of foreign cloth in almost all places. Mr. C. Krishnan Nair of Travancore was included in the first batch of volunteers led by Gandhiji at Dandi. Mr. Thappan Nair, Swami Ananda Tirth, Mr. G. Ramachandran and others from Kerala were similarly included in the first batch of Satyagrahis led by Mr. C. Rajagopalachari to Vedaranyam beach. Many from Malabar participated in the movement at Bombay and other places. From 6 to 13 April, the National Week was observed in all solemnity throughout Malabar and in some places in Cochin and Travancore. Costly silk and woollen dress were flung into and consumed by the flames of fire at several places where public meetings were held and pledges taken.

The leaders organised a Satyagraha camp at Verkot House in Calicut on 10 April.⁸ At the camp the Satyagrahi volunteers hailing from all parts of Kerala got proper training under the guidance of the Kerala Yuvak Sangh.

At the instigation of the authorities, a few elements, calling themselves loyalists, sought to provoke several incidents so as to disturb the public meetings organised by the Indian National Congress in Malabar. They threatened the people that the continuance of the Satyagraha would plunge the land in utter chaos and pave the way to a more disastrous rebellion than that of 1921.

7. Mr. A. K. Warrior, Parcel Clerk, South Indian Railway, Tellicherry resigned his job and enrolled himself as a volunteer to join the first batch of Satyagrahis. Similarly Mr. K. A. Damodara Menon and Mr. P. K. Ramunni Nair employed at Rangoon, resigned their jobs in July and became volunteers at Calicut. Mr. T. R. Venkatachalam resigned his office at Tellicherry and enrolled himself as a Satyagrahi volunteer at Bombay. It may be added that two members of Indian Territorial Force also offered their resignation, namely, Hony. Lt. and Subedar, T. C. Ramunni Kurup of the 15th Malabar Battalion and Lance Naik, K. P. Sankaran Nambiar of 12th Malabar Battalion. Besides the above, Mr. Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair had resigned his job in the Madras Fisheries Department and joined the national movement as soon as Gandhiji announced his decision to march to Dandi to offer Satyagraha and break the Salt Law.

8. This house belongs to an old and aristocratic family and was the venue of many important events during the Civil Disobedience Movement. Many members of the family including old ladies served the motherland in her distress and courted imprisonment during the period, 1930-1947.

Some of the newspapers also like the *Mitavadi*, the *Deepam* and the *Sahodaran* strongly expressed themselves against the new movement. Yet the movement gathered momentum day by day.

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, as noted earlier, had decided that the first batch of volunteers,⁹ to be led by Mr. K. Kelappen should start from Calicut on 13 April 1930, tread their way by road northward through various villages and finally break the Salt Law at the Payyannur beach. The people of North Malabar were legitimately proud of the decision and got ready to extend an honourable welcome to the brave patriots. Most of the volunteers hailed from respectable families in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore and well-educated as they were, were holding responsible positions. At the break of day on 13 April a large number of ladies and gentlemen gathered¹⁰ at the Satyagraha camp to give the volunteers an affectionate send-off.

The programme of the Satyagrahis was to march every day from 6 a. m. to 12 Noon and again 2 p. m. to 6 p. m. and spend the night in any village where they would exhort the people to stick to non-violence even under the gravest provocation. All along the route the volunteers were accorded a hearty welcome.¹¹

Meanwhile, the Satyagraha Committee requested Mr. T. R. Krishnaswami Iyer to organise a second batch of volunteers from

9. They included Messrs. K. Kesavan Nair, P. Rama Kurup, M. Kunhandy, P. Krishna Pillai, P. K. Gopala Pillai, T. Subramanian Tirumumb, V. Unnaman Unitiri, O. V. Srikanta Poduval, M. V. Appu, P. C. Kunhiraman Atiyoti, V. M. Krishnan Nair, V. Echur, K. Madhavan, K. Kunhappa Nambiar, K. Kelu Kurup, T. V. Ramunni Kidav, K. P. Gopalan, A. K. Warriar, A. Narayana Pai, C. Achutha Kurup, K. Narayanan Nair, P. Madhavan Nair, M. N. Pisharoti, P. Kesava Pillai, K. M. Kunhiraman Nambiar, P. C. Karunakaran, K. V. Kumhirama Poduval, P. V. Kumhiraman Nambiar, N. V. Gowridas, K. Kumaran Nair and K. T. Kunhiraman Nambiar (Captain).
10. Mr. K. Madhavan Nair, with tears trickling down his eyes, congratulated the "fortunate warriors" of Kerala and exhorted them to stick to truth and non-violence. He presented a purse containing Rs. 500 to Mr. Kelappen on behalf of the public of Calicut.
11. The people decorated the roads with tricolour flags and festoons, treated the Satyagrahis to cool drinks and refreshments as it was the hottest part of the year and offered them flowers. At certain places caparisoned elephants received them. Members of the landed aristocracy extended their own hospitality and among them, Mr. Sankara Varma Raja of Kadanad stood foremost. On 16 April as the party reached the village of Chombal, the local residents under the leadership of Mr. C. Samuel Aaron, the great industrialist of North Malabar, gave them a rousing reception. At Chokli, the next village of importance, the local people, led by

Palghat to Payyannur. On 19 April that batch started from *Sabari Ashram* at Olavakkot near Palghat, under the captaincy of Mr. R. V. Sharma.¹²

Mr. P. Muhammad, welcomed and garlanded the Satyagrahis. Next day, at Tellicherry, a blind beggar put a quarter anna coin in the Satyagraha Committee's *hundi* box saying, "this, to Kelappan Nair's fund for giving salt to the poor." At the public meeting at Tellicherry some reactionary elements sought to create trouble but dispersed on an appeal made by Mr. Kelappan. On 19 April the Satyagrahis were at Thottada, on the outskirts of Cannanore, where members of the Sarasvat Brahmin community presented them with a purse. The Y. M. M. A. also accorded them a hearty welcome. A mammoth gathering attended the public meeting held on the Cannanore *maidan*. At Baliapatam, an important centre of trade, the Satyagrahis crossed the ferry in boats decorated with flags and festoons. The Aarons played host to the party at Pappinisseri. The participation of the Aarons in the national movement, said Mr. Kelappan, was of unique importance for at the time, members of the Christian community in general were still continuing as neutral spectators.

12. On 18 April there was a propaganda meeting at Akatetara near Palghat when Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon's sisters presented the Satyagrahis with a gold ring. Next day as they started, the Satyagrahis were garlanded by Mr. R. Raghava Menon and they were, on the way, honourably received at many places like Peruvemba, Vadavannur, Kollengode, Pudiyanam and Perumkulam. At Pudiyanam there was a splendid reception on 20 April. The streets were gaily decorated. At Perumkulam, which was in a festive mood, every house was decorated with lights at night as on the occasion of *Karthikai deepam* festival and special worship offered in the temples. The Satyagrahis touched Alatur and Vadakkancherry in Palghat Taluk on their way and at Manjapra, the opposition evinced by some orthodox Brahmins evaporated as a result of fervent appeals addressed to them by Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer and Mr. S. Nilakanta Iyer. At Kannambra, Balagangadharan, the young son of Mr. P. Velu Nair removed a gold chain from his neck and made a gift of it to the Satyagraha movement; at night, the Nair Veedu, an ancient aristocratic family, feted the Satyagrahis. The Brahmin community at Pudukode received them with music but a few orthodox members opposed the entry of the 'low caste' Satyagrahis into the *Agraharam* or Brahmin street whereupon the Brahmin members of the party refused, in protest, to take any food in the village. Mr. Lakshminarayana Iyer of Kollengode presented to the Satyagraha Fund a silver vessel weighing seventy-five *tolas* to fetch sea water on condition that the vessel would be used only by the Satyagrahis and that, after the Satyagraha, it must be presented to Svaraj Bhavan, Allahabad, as a memento. The party next passed through Tiruvilamala, Lakkiti, Ottapalam and Shoranur and by this time the number of volunteers had risen to thirty-three. At Shoranur, the party entrained for Payyannur.

On 16 April 1930 Gandhiji sent from Navasari a message to Mr. K. Madhavanar, Secretary, Kerala Provincial Congress Committee: "Glad to learn Kelappan Nair with a band of law-breakers has started out. Keep me informed of the activities there." While at Dandi, he sent another message to the youths and *swadeshi* workers of Malabar through the Youth Leaguer, Mr. Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair, in which he exhorted them to read the *young India*, to spin and wear khadi only and maintain non-violence under all circumstances.¹³ At this time, the *Aikyam*, a Muslim periodical in Malayalam, published in Cochin State and edited by Mr. K. M. Secthi Saheb¹⁴ called upon the Muslims of Kerala, through an editorial, to enter the field of battle for the freedom of the country. Islam, it said, was opposed to slavery of any kind and every Muslim should make it his duty to fight for freedom.¹⁵ Citing various instances of the atrocities perpetrated by the Government, the periodical added that Gandhiji's Civil Disobedience Movement was intended to set free the poor Muslim victims who were suffering in the Andamans as convicts.

As Mr. K. Kelappan and his first batch of Satyagrahis reached the village of Pariyaram near Payyannur on 21 April, ladies led by Mrs. Gracy Aaron showered flowers and rice on them. The Youth League at Pazhayangadi presented them with a purse and address. The entire route from Pariyaram to Payyannur was tastefully decorated. There was a ceremonial reception at Payyannur.¹⁶ The atmosphere was surcharged with emotion as national songs were sung. Thousands of villagers gathered at the place in anxious enthusiasm. Mr. Kelappan addressed the huge gathering for two hours emphasising the importance of non-violence and Satyagraha. There was a great bonfire of foreign cloth after his address.

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13. On Gandhiji's advice, Mr. S. V. Subramania Iyer, Supervisor in the Co-operative Union and Mr. T. N. Ramunni Menon, Inspector of Co-operative Societies in Malabar, resigned their offices in order to devote themselves to khadi work. Similarly Mr. M. R. Ramaswamy Iyer, Teacher, Vivekodayam High School, Trichur, and Mr. S. Nilakanta Iyer, Teacher in the High School, Ottapalam left their schools. They were members of the second batch of Satyagrahis under Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer.
 14. He became a leader of the Muslim League later. He died in April 1961 while he was the Speaker of the Kerala Legislative Assembly.
 15. Muhammad Mustafa of Palghat, a student, enrolled himself as a volunteer and donated some amount to the Satyagraha Fund. Thus he earned the honour of becoming the first Muslim Satyagrahi in Malabar in the Salt Satyagraha campaign.
 16. Mr. Thazhekkat Manayil Unnikrishnan Tirumumb, member of an aristocratic Nambudiri family, welcomed the Satyagrahis.

The Satyagraha camp at Payyannur was located on the spacious premises of the large cocoanut farm belonging to Mr. C. Samuel Aaron. People from the adjacent villages visited the camp in large numbers and offered money and food to the volunteers. A contingent of police force, with officers and men of the Excise Department, was stationed, not far away from the satyagraha camp.

At dawn on 23 April, after mass prayer, Mr. Kelappan and the other volunteers marched to the beach, each with a small bag and a cocoanut shell to scrape salt. It was amusing to see mud all over the salt fields on the beach, presumably scattered by the officers of the Excise Department to mislead the Satyagrahis. Mr. Kelappan in all solemnity scraped out some salt, thus becoming the first Salt Satyagrahi in Kerala. He tasted the salt he had taken as a right. As the volunteers too marched ahead and took salt, the enthusiastic crowd who had gathered rushed forward and broke the law, the police under the Deputy Superintendent, Rao Saheb P. Balakrishna Menon, quietly watching the scene from a distance. After the visitors to the camp dispersed, a party of police and excise men under the Assistant Inspector of Excise went to the Satyagraha camp and produced a warrant from the Stationary Sub-Magistrate, Payyannur, authorising the confiscation of all the salt that the Satyagrahis had collected. Mr. Kelappan protested. The officer then attempted to seize the vessel in which some of the volunteers were boiling the salt water to refine the crude salt. The volunteers prevented the seizure. Both the parties continued the struggle for nearly two hours without any resort to violence and finally the official party gave up the game. Meanwhile the local villagers had gathered at the place once again and after the officers retired, they bought the refined salt as a whole on the spot.

On 25 April, the second batch of Satyagrahis organised and directed by Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer who had arrived at Payyannur on the previous day, broke the law. Every evening, thereafter, public meetings were held and small packets of salt sold. The major brunt of the organisation of all activities at the camp was borne by the silent and devoted worker, Mr. C. H. Govindan Nambiar.

Besides Payyannur, Kunhimangalam and Karivallur also were scenes of the breaking of the Salt Law by the volunteers. A wholesome development took place at this time. On 26 April 1930 Mr. Muhammad Abdur Rahman, Editor of the *Al Ameen*, a nationalist Muslim tri-weekly published at Calicut, appealed to the Muslims in Malabar to join the struggle for freedom¹⁷ and remain non-violent.

17. It was announced that Messrs. Muhammad Abdur Rahman, Hassan Koya Mulla, Moidu Moulvi, P. Moideen Koya, N. V. Abu and Ahmad Koya had decided to join the movement.

without falling into the hands of the Government and the reactionaries. Next day, for the first time in the struggle in 1930, the Muslim leaders of Calicut attended a huge public meeting on the Calicut beach held under the auspices of the Congress Committee and presided over by Mr. Hassan Koya Mulla.¹⁸ This meeting was of profound significance as it awakened the Muslims all over Malabar.

On 29 April, Mr. Kelappan and his band of volunteers reached Trikkaripur, then in South Kanara District, on their way to Hosdurg. As Mr. Kelappan auctioned a packet of Satyagraha Salt he was arrested by the police, along with others.¹⁹ They refused to go on bail but were let off.

Early in May, Mr. E. M. Gawne, I. C. S., Collector of Malabar, issued a press note in the following terms:²⁰

The loyal section among the people of Malabar might question why the Government do not prevent the Salt Satyagrahi law breakers collecting salt at Payyannur every day. Our reply is that the Government have received no information that the volunteers have violated the Salt Law up till now. The volunteers have not tried to make salt openly from out of the saliferous earth which they collect from the salt fields. The Excise officials have on examination, found that the soil which the volunteers collect contain very little salt and that salt which they sell as contraband to the public is not what they get from salt pans. It is no offence to sell the bazaar salt for which the trader has already paid the excise duty. What the Satyagrahis do is to boil bazaar salt, purify it and sell it to the public as the salt obtained by breaking the law. By this the Government

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18. Mr. Abdur Rahman and Mr. Moidu Moulvi delivered inspiring speeches at the meeting at the end of which a procession headed by Mr. Kelappan and Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer went along the important streets of Calicut.
 19. Mr. C. M. K. Nair who bought the salt was arrested, as well as Mr. K. T. Kunhiraman Nambiar, the Volunteer Captain, Mr. P. Krishna Pillai, Mr. V. V. Chathukutty Nair and others who were in possession of salt. As the crowd around got excited, Mr. S. Nilakanta Iyer pacified them. Subsequently fresh arrests of the volunteers were made by the South Kanara police at Pulikkot Village on 30 April. The arrested persons including Messrs. K. T. Kunhiraman Nambiar, K. Kunhappa Nambiar, P. Krishna Pillai, V. Narayanan, A. K. Warriar and T. Harisvaran Tirumumb had been offering salt for sale. By midnight however all of them were let off.
 20. 2 May 1930. This is not the text of the actual press note but a translation of its Malayalam version published in the *Mathrubhumi*.

do not lose the excise revenue. Therefore Government do not propose to arrest and imprison people and maintain them at the expense of the tax-payer so long as no harm is done and offence committed against the Government or the public or Government and public property.

Mr. Kelappan was surprised at the pretended ignorance and ostrich-like attitude of the Collector whom he challenged to examine the packets of the crude salt collected by the Satyagrahis at various places.²¹ No clarification or threat from the authorities could pour cold water on popular enthusiasm.²²

The Government had already begun to adopt repressive measures, especially in North India. Gandhiji was compelled to observe: "Even Dyerism pales into insignificance. The duty before the people is clear. They must answer this organised hooliganism with great suffering." He himself decided on a most definite violation of the Salt Law at Darasana, about one hundred and fifty miles north of Bombay. The Government did not arrest him so far so as to avoid the "emotional reaction which might possibly have led to dangerous demonstrations while the strength of the Congress movement remained unimpaired" as well as "the danger of giving the movement, in its initial stages, an impetus of perhaps considerable duration." The Government believed that their policy of forbearance had, in the eyes of the Moderates, discredited the position of Gandhiji and caused him some embarrassment. The Government of India kept themselves in touch with the Provincial Governments.²³ However at 12.45 a. m.

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21. Mr. Kelappan's letter to the Collector of Malabar, dated 7 May 1930, in which he gave complete details of the processes of salt manufacture adopted by the Satyagrahis in the different parts of North Malabar.
 22. It is interesting to record that on 2 May 1930 the Sub-Inspector of Police at Kanhangad requested the eighty-five year-old head of *Echikanath* House, a prosperous aristocratic family, to dissuade his young nephew, Mr. A. C. Kannan Nair, President of the North Malabar District Congress Committee, from participating in the Satyagraha movement. The grand octogenarian at once retorted that a Government that taxed salt and water did not deserve to exist and that, if necessary, he himself would break the Salt Law. The Sub-Inspector quietly left the place.
 23. Secret telegraphic communication to the Provincial Governments dated 22 April 1930. The Government of India wanted to know whether Gandhiji's arrest would assist in checking the Civil Disobedience Movement or lead to a dangerous situation and whether the government's inaction was producing any unsettling effect on their loyal supporters. They particularly wanted to be advised about the possible attitude of the Muslims after the arrest or of other element that had been keeping themselves aloof so far.

on 4 May, Gandhiji was arrested according to a pre-arranged plan, by the District Magistrate of Surat helped by two officers armed with pistols and some armed policemen, in his Karadi camp, three miles from Dandi under Regulation XXV of 1827. He was then taken away to Yeravada Central Jail.

The news of Gandhiji's arrest was received in Kerala, as elsewhere, with great indignation. Throughout the country there were hartals, strikes, black-flag processions and protest meetings.²⁴ In spite of warning from the police, the hartal was almost complete in towns like Calicut, Cannanore, Palghat and Tellicherry. Everywhere on 5 May the students kept themselves away from schools and colleges. At many places in the States of Cochin and Travancore the hartal was equally spontaneous. Many resigned the offices held by them.²⁵

Ever since the movement had started in Malabar, a section of the Muslims was disturbing the Satyagrahis at several places, under the instigation of the Government and the powerful reactionary elements in society. But the thinking section of the community threw its full weight in favour of the movement. Mr. K. Uppi Saheb M. L. C. appealed to the Muslims not to throw mud on the patriots but abandon their obstructionist tactics. Mr. Moidu Moulvi of Calicut started on 6 May with a batch of volunteers from Payyannur, the venue of the Satyagraha campaign, to the South on a propaganda tour. They had to deal with the obstructionist tactics of a few Muslims at Baliapatam. The latter tried to assault them in the presence of the

24. The huge public gathering at Ernakulam was presided over by the local Municipal Chairman who appealed to the people to join the Satyagraha movement. There was a similar meeting at Trichur. At Payyannur in North Malabar a huge black-flag procession ended in a public meeting on 5 May, characterised by a bonfire of foreign cloth. It was indeed a touching scene when the people threw the foreign cloths they wore into the fire. More than fifty persons who did so had to be helped to cover their nakedness by friends who presented to them their own khadi *angavastram* or bath towels. Many took a vow before the fire that they would wear only khadi thereafter. Mr. Vengayil Govindankutty Nayanar was the person who lit the bonfire after throwing all the foreign cloth he was wearing into the heap and borrowing a towel to cover his nakedness.

25. Mr. A. C. Kannan Nair, President and eight members of the Hosdurg Panchayat Board resigned their seats in protest against Gandhiji's arrest. Mr. Edamana Illath Vishnu Nambudiri, Village Munsiff of Kattampally near Payyannur resigned his office. He had earlier made a financial contribution to the Satyagraha Fund. On the other hand, Mr. A. P. Raman, President, Ponnani Taluk Board, issued a circular to the Board staff warning them against supporting the Satyagrahis and exhorting them to do propaganda in the village in favour of the Government.

police who remained silent spectators. Yet Mr. Moidu Moulvi succeeded in holding a public meeting at which he exposed, in a stirring speech, the reactionary ways of a few unthinking Muslims. His subsequent speeches in other towns and villages slowly opened the eyes of many people, especially the younger generation, who decided to join the struggle for freedom and enrolled themselves as Satyagraha volunteers.

CHAPTER 18.

THE STRUGGLE INTENSIFIED

Though the Salt Law was being broken by the Satyagrahis at Payyannur and other places in North Malabar the authorities practically remained indifferent in the early stages. In fact, some dulness crept in even among the Satyagrahis themselves. It was at that juncture that the leaders decided to break the Salt Law at Calicut itself.

At 5.30 a. m. on 12 May, 1930, nearly forty volunteers started from the Satyagraha camp at Calicut under Mr. K. Kelappan followed by a large gathering of people. The procession wended its way to the beach where, after the salutation of the tri-colour flag, Mr. Kelappan and Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer exhorted those present to observe strict non-violence even in an atmosphere of cruel repression.

By this time a large contingent of armed police, headed by Mr. Bulkley, District Superintendent of Police, and Mr. E. V. Amu Saheb, Assistant Superintendent of Police, arrived at the spot and surrounded the volunteers. Six of them,¹ avoiding the police, instantly advanced to the sea and fetched sea water in pails while others prepared to make a fire. The District Superintendent of Police asked the gathering, in broken Malayalam, to disperse at once and after a minute or two of impatient waiting, ordered his men to make a lathi charge. More than a hundred police men pounced on the defenceless Satyagrahis who were beaten mercilessly and kicked with boots. The atrocities continued for about an hour.² The police who were fired arrested, without warrants, the leaders³ including Mr. Kelappan, President of the Kerala Provincial Congress

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1. Messrs. Muhammad Abdur Rahman, T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, C. Balakrishna Kurup, Ganapathi Moosad, P. Gopalan and Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar.
 2. No Satyagrahi was spared. Mr. Amu Saheb singled out Mr. Muhammad Abdur Rahman and tried to twist his neck. Mr. Bulkley ran about with lathi in hand, beating everybody. Even innocent pedestrians received their share of blows. Messrs. Krishnaswamy Iyer, R. S. Sarma and P. Krishna Pillai, a volunteer from Travancore, were the others who suffered most. It was a naked display of terror.
 3. Messrs. Muhammad Abdur Rahman, (Editor *Al-Ameen*, Calicut), T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, R. S. Sarma, P. Krishna Pillai and K. Madhavanar, (Secretary, Kerala Provincial Congress Committee).

Committee. Mr. Krishnaswamy Iyer who demanded the production of the warrant of arrest, was dragged along the road and put in the police van. There was prolonged, yet non-violent, struggle between the police and two volunteers, Mr. P. Krishna Pillai and Mr. R. S. Sarma, who were prepared neither to lower the flag nor part with it. Lathis fell on their heads and shoulders as cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi-ki Jai' rent the air. Several other volunteers also received injuries' at the hands of the police in the struggle between the flesh and the spirit. The arrested leaders were produced before the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Calicut.⁵ Charged under section 45, Indian Penal Code and Section 74 C and F of the Madras Salt Act, the accused refused to take part in the trial and were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for nine months. On being taken to the Central Jail at Cannanore they received vociferous cheers from enthusiastic crowds that had gathered at all the railway stations and a hearty welcome on arrival at the destination.

The whole of Malabar observed a hartal. Protest meetings were held to condemn the inhuman atrocities perpetrated on non-violent Satyagrahis, the immediate result of which was the arousing of mass enthusiasm throughout Kerala. Hundreds of persons sent applications to the Satyagraha Committee for enrolment as volunteers but they had to wait for their turn as there were organisational and financial difficulties involved in maintaining large Satyagraha camps. Financial contributions came from Malayalee residents of Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Poona and other big cities outside Kerala.

After the arrest and imprisonment of Mr. K. Kelappan, Mr. Moidu Moulvi was chosen as leader by the Satyagraha Committee, of which Mr. Koya Kunhi became a newly-elected member.

The Satyagraha Committee decided to send small batches of volunteers to break the Salt Law at the Calicut beach, every day

4. Some of them were Messrs. P. Kunhikannan Nair, V. K. Prabhakaran, E. K. Shankaran Nair, P. P. Krishnan Nair, N. V. Abu, M. Sankaran Nambiar, K. Madhavan, K. Sankara Menon, M. Govindan Nair, P. R. Gopala Pillai, C. Achutha Kurup, M. Kuttan, K. Damodaran, Ganapathi Moosad, A. N. Raghavan Nair, T. S. Krishna Pillai, E. C. Kunhikannan Nambiar and C. Balakrishna Kurup. It must be recorded that some of the Sub-Inspectors and constables were asking their colleagues to be less cruel in their charges. But Mr. Bulkley and Mr. Anu Saheb were beside themselves with rage.
5. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Mr. Saldanah, was ready to hold the court even at eight O' clock in the morning. Mr. P. Krishna Pillai, informed him that he did not intend to respect the court. The Inspector General of Police complained of the inadequacy of the sentence awarded by Mr. J. A. Saldanah who was eventually transferred from Calicut.

from 13 May. On that day four volunteers⁶ marched to the beach and as they started to boil the sea water, the police under Mr. Amu Saheb broke the mud pots with their lathis. Next day again, in the morning, four other volunteers got ready at the beach to break the law. There was no sign of the police anywhere but Mr. J. A. Saldanah, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, followed by his orderly appeared on the spot and tried to remove the tri-colour flag fixed on a pole in the sands. A defiant crowd surrounded both but the Satyagrahi volunteers protected them and escorted them to safety.⁷ Subsequently salt was manufactured and carried through the important streets by the enthusiastic crowd.⁸

In North Malabar, Mr. A. C. Kannan Nair, President of the North Malabar District Congress Committee and an influential leader, was arrested at a public meeting at Kanhangad⁹ and taken to Mangalore whereupon the entire town observed a hartal. Mr. K. T. Kunhiraman Nambiar, Volunteer Captain, also was arrested. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate at Puttur sentenced both of them on 17 May to undergo rigorous imprisonment for six months.

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6. Messrs. Mustafa, M. M. Menon, Puthusseri Kunhikannan Nair and C. Achutha Kurup. Mr. K. Madhavan Nair and Mr. T. V. Sundara Iyer were present at the beach to watch the process of salt manufacture.
 7. The officer behaved courteously, when surrounded by the crowd. But a few people mistook him to be a European officer and would have roughly handled him and his orderly but for the timely protection offered by the Satyagrahis. His hat, however, was snatched away and passed from hand to hand, to the general amusement of all. Finally as a result of an appeal from the volunteers, the hat was given back to the officer. After he left the scene, Mr. Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar admonished the crowd for the unhappy incident as that would discredit the movement based upon non-violence and warned them that on a repetition of the same in future the entire movement in Malabar might be called off. The crowd expressed their deep regret and loudly gave him an assurance for the future. It would appear that the officer went independently of the police after ascertaining that the police meant to leave the Satyagrahis to themselves, on that day. (Report of the Inspector-General, Madras).
 8. Sympathisers gave fancy prices like Rs. 5 or a gold ring for a packet of 'Swaraj Salt' weighing one *tola*. Such packets of salt were sold at public meetings addressed by the leaders throughout Malabar. Mrs. Alice a Swiss artist, who was on a visit to the country, voluntarily bought at Guruvayur a packet that had been got down from the Dandi Satyagraha camp of Gandhiji and expressed her sense of pride.
 9. He was being taken in a police car, after the arrest, but his admirers lay flat on the road and obstructed the passage. When reminded of the creed of non-violence, they however made way.

The Local Bodies in Malabar did not lag behind in protesting against the Government's repressive policy. At a meeting of the Calicut Municipal Council held on 14 May, Dr. A. Chandu moved a resolution for an adjournment of the proceedings as a protest against the arrest of Gandhiji and other leaders. Mr. Haddow, a nominated European Councillor, argued that the Council should be concerned only with civic matters. When the motion was put to vote, there was a tie whereupon the Chairman, Mr. C. V. Narayana Menon gave his casting vote against the resolution. Those in favour of it walked out and the Council, now without a quorum, was adjourned. Similarly, the Malabar District Board met on 15 May under its permanent President, Khan Saheb T. M. Moidu Saheb, when Mr. V. Sankaranarayana Menon moved for an adjournment of the meeting as a protest against the Government's policy. The resolution was carried and the meeting adjourned. The Valluvanad and Palghat Taluk Boards also passed resolutions of protest.

Meanwhile a party of volunteers¹⁰ from Travancore headed by Messrs. Ponnara G. Sridhar, K. Kumar and Amsi Narayana Pillai arrived at Calicut on 16 May. Next day, large masses of people broke the Salt Law at twenty-seven places on the Calicut beach when the volunteers from Travancore and the Gujarati residents of the town enthusiastically joined them. The "law breakers", carrying pots of salt, went round the town shouting slogans but the police did not interfere.

When the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met on 17 May at Payyannur, Mr. K. Madhavan Nair was elected as its President (in the place of Mr. K. Kelappan) and Mr. P. K. Kunhisankara Menon, as Secretary. The Committee¹¹ took a vital decision to extend the Satyagraha to other places in Malabar in view of the rising popular enthusiasm. A Committee was constituted to organise khadi work in Kerala in order to satisfy the increasing demand of the people. It was also resolved to organise a District Congress Committee in Travancore.

10. The people of Princely States were not permitted to start the Satyagraha in their own localities but could go to British territory for that purpose. Mr. K. Kumar who had been actively engaged in Harijan Welfare work was invited by Mr. Sridhar to join the party of volunteers. The party marched on foot along the west coast and arrived at Calicut.
11. Messrs. Koya Kunhi, T. V. Chathukutty Nair, K. Kunhappa Nambiar, P. V. Sukumaran and S. Nilakanta Iyer were elected to the vacant seats in the Committee.

Meanwhile a Committee of women¹² was formed at Calicut for effective khadi work. Its members and other ladies soon organised a number of classes in spinning, carried on house-to-house propaganda and distributed *charka* and cotton among a large number of people throughout Malabar.

The propaganda for Prohibition also was earnestly taken up. An appeal was made to the toddy tappers not to indulge in the sale of liquor and to the owners of trees not to lease them for tapping.¹³ Palghat gave the lead to the Prohibition movement.

Though every day hundreds of people went to the Calicut beach, broke the Salt Law, held meetings and took out processions, the police pretended to be indifferent. A certain amount of dulness naturally crept in. So the Satyagraha Committee decided to divert the attention of the people to constructive work including boycott of foreign cloth, khadi and *swadeshi* propaganda, Prohibition and rural uplift. Mr. Moidu Moulvi and Mr. S. Nilakanta Iyer gave proper guidance to the constructive workers in different areas. Khadi-spinning classes sprang up everywhere. The *swadeshi* movement gathered momentum. Mr. K. Madhavan Nair toured all over Malabar and appealed to the cloth merchants in person not to import foreign cloth. Committees were formed in several places for the boycott of foreign cloth.

This propaganda began to bear fruit in course of time. The Malabar Chamber of Commerce, Calicut, viewed the prevailing political situation with alarm and represented to the Viceroy that if the Government were not going to adopt a sane and conciliatory policy the industries in the country would be ruined. They pointed out that the boycott movement had already brought a great loss to the merchants and demanded the immediate grant of Dominion Status. They resolved to take steps for the development of indigenous industries.

In a lengthy press-note, released on 23 May, Mr. K. Madhavan Nair had emphasised the importance of non-violence in word and deed and advised those who could not control themselves, never to

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12. The Committee consisted of Smt. T. Narayani Amma, Mrs. U. Gopala Menon, Smt. K. E. Sarada and Mrs. Margaret Pavamani.
 13. At Quilon in Travancore a new organisation, called *Swadeshi* and Temperance League, was formed to popularise *swadeshi* and support Prohibition. Its Working Committee included Messrs. P. Karunakara Menon, C. Sankara Menon, C. V. Kunjuraman, P. N. Nilakanta Pillai, C. Kesavan, C. S. Sankara Menon, M. Govinda Pillai, K. G. Shankar and Rama Warriar (The *Malayala Rajyam* dated 8 June 1930).

resort to places where the Satyagrahis did their job. He also explained the decision of the Satyagraha Council and the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee not to launch the movement in Ernad, Valluvanad and Ponani in South Malabar as it was felt that many of the people of those areas were not yet trained enough to observe perfect non-violence.

Evidently an ardent sense of nationalism throbbed in every heart throughout Kerala.¹⁴ The courting of arrest became the order of the day. Mr. K. Kumar (of Travancore) was arrested on 27 May at Cannanore for having broken the Salt Law and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for nine months.¹⁵ Next day Mr. P. K. Kunhisankara Menon was arrested for having manufactured salt at Quilandy and sentenced to undergo three months' imprisonment. Mr. S. Sankaranarayana Pillai was arrested at Trichur for being in possession of contraband salt. Outside Kerala also, several Malayalee volunteers had enrolled themselves as Satyagrahis. Reference has already been made to their part in the Satyagraha at Dandi and Vedaranyam. Dr. Ambadi Krishna Menon,¹⁶ a leading Medical Practitioner of Ernakulam was arrested and convicted at Madras on his way to Darasana to break the law. M. Ponnara G. Sridhar who

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14. The European chief agent of a famous British cigarette making firm went to Payyannur to book orders but none of the merchants placed any order with him. He was also not permitted to paste advertisement posters anywhere in that small town.

Mr. Kannan Vaidyar of Kanhangad was boycotted by the local people for he had given his car for use by the police at the time of Mr. A. C. Kannan Nair's arrest. He was refused petrol for his car by the dealers in the town.

15. Mr. Kumar was kept in the Cannanore, Vellore and Bellary Jails. He suffered a lot and even threatened to offer hunger-strike. After his release, he organised, at the request of Mr. Pandavath Sankara Pillai, the picketing of foreign-cloth shops at Alleppey as a result of which he was again locked up in jail at Ambalapuzha for some time. He also organised the Prohibition campaign in Cochin. Thereafter he devoted himself to Harijan work in Travancore.
16. Mr. Menon had been in the Indian Medical Service previously and had served in the first World War and worked in the Military Hospitals in England and France. He delivered a speech in front of the Pachaiyappas College, Madras. He was sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for six months under section 151 Cr. P. C. and given A class in Jail.

led twelve volunteers from Malabar to Sholapur was severely beaten at Vadala in Bombay where Satyagraha was being offered.¹⁷

This stage of the movement was, to some extent, characterised by the tussle between the conservative and the progressive elements in Malabar. On one side we have the picture of the All-Kerala Muslim Youth League Conference condemning at Ernakulam on 27 May the police misdeeds in Calicut perpetrated under Mr. Amu Saheb's leadership and resolving to encourage *swadeshi* and khadi. On the other side we find a few turbulent Muslims obstructing the manufacture of salt at Quilandy and heaping abuses on the Satyagrahis.¹⁸ Similarly when the twenty-seventh session of the S. N. D. P. Conference met in the Town hall, Calicut on 31 May and 1 June, the delegates and visitors expected a big tussle between the reactionaries and the nationalists. Mr. P. Achuthan, member of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, gave notice of an urgent resolution to be moved later at the plenary session in protest against the arrest of Gandhiji and the other leaders of the Congress and in support of the Civil Disobedience Movement. It roused some excitement but was finally passed.¹⁹

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17. A Police Sergeant beat Mr. Sridhar with a lathi. When the latter protested more blows were given until he fell down unconscious. Two of his followers, Messrs. Lakshmanan Pillai and Thomas, also got blows. Mr. Sridhar was removed to the Congress Hospital in Bombay. On his return to Travancore later, he organised the *Hindustan Seva Dal* at Alleppey where Messrs. A. K. Bavachan, P. Gangadharan (of Palluruthy), N. Kunhikrishna Pillai (of Quilon), N. Vasudevan Nambisan (of Alwaye) and K. Kesavan served as volunteers for nearly twenty-five days. Mr. Bavachan, Mr. Gangadharan and Mr. Vasudevan Nambisan were subsequently arrested at Calicut.
 18. This would have led to a serious scuffle between the hooligans and some members of the public present on the spot but for the intervention of the Satyagrahis. Later the citizens at a public meeting condemned the action of the hooligans, many of whom had been instigated by the authorities.
 19. Mr. C. Krishnan, Editor of the *Mitavadi* of Calicut was the Chairman of the Reception Committee and Mr. A. P. Raman, President, Ponani Taluk Board, the President-elect. Mr. Achuthan's resolution was moved after the Chairman of the Reception Committee and the President delivered their addresses. The resolution was seconded by Mr. P. M. Anandan and supported by Mr. V. R. Nanoo of Travancore. Mr. O. C. Srinivasan, Secretary of the Conference and Mr. P. V. Mukundan stoutly opposed it using, it was alleged, unparliamentary language. The majority of the delegates and visitors got excited whereupon Mr. Krishnan and Mr. Raman unceremoniously left the hall. Mr. K. P. Govinda Panicker (of Travancore) was then voted to the vacant chair. Mr. C. V. Kunjuraman, leading journalist and social

At the meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee held at Payyannur on 1 June, Mr. Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad was elected as Secretary in the place of Mr. Kunhisankara Menon who had been sentenced to imprisonment. The Committee resolved to organise the picketing of shops selling foreign cloth as well as to carry on the propaganda in favour of Prohibition and appealed to the people not to pay from their own pocket the fines if any imposed on the Satyagrahis. On the background of these resolutions, District-wide propaganda was soon organised. In this connection the members of the Kerala *Yuvak Sangh* under Mr. E. C. Kunhikannan Nambiar conducted a vigorous campaign in North Malabar.

On 5 June, for the first time in Malabar, Satyagraha volunteers, carrying tri-colour flags went in procession to picket the liquor shops at Payyannur. On the whole, the work of the nationalists was a great success there.²⁰

The eighth day of June was observed all over Malabar, as the All-Kerala Salt Satyagraha day when large masses of people broke the law. Many volunteers and important leaders were arrested at Payyannur, Tellicherry, Badagara, Tikkoti and Calicut and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for periods ranging from six to eight

worker of Travancore, supported Mr. Achuthan's resolution which was passed with acclamation by all except Mr. Srinivasan and Mr. Mukundan. Next day also, Mr. Raman and Mr. Krishnan did not attend the conference. Mr. Achuthan's resolution and another resolution moved by Dr. Rugmini Amma of Travancore, enjoining the use of khadi and *swadeshi*, were passed.

20. Two volunteers were posted before each shop to carry on the picketing. Messrs. E. Gopala Panikkar, A. K. Warriar, P. Kesavan Nair, Kesava Pillai and M. Kumaran were the first Satyagrahis to start picketing. The volunteers were insulted and threatened by the owners of some of the shops as well as the excise officials. Mr. P. Kesavan Nair a volunteer, was badly assaulted and kicked by a shop-keeper who was warned by the excited people that gathered not to resort to such rude behaviour again. At the request of the volunteers, some of the habitual drunkards went away without entering the shops. At another place in Payyannur town, the polite shop-keeper offered a bench to the volunteers to sit on while some members of the public tried to erect *pandals* to shelter them from the sun and the rain. But Mr. A. K. Warriar requested them not to do so as the object of the Satyagraha was to change the heart of the shop-keepers through the suffering of the volunteers.

months.²¹ Though the Satyagrahis were respectable people who had voluntarily courted arrest under patriotic urge, they were treated in the Central Jail at Cannanore as if they were ordinary prisoners convicted for heinous offences. They were compelled to do manual work and allowed to read neither newspapers nor books.²²

Special mention has to be made about the proceedings taken against Mr. Samuel Aaron, the great industrialist of North Malabar. He had given the Brighter Hotel Buildings at Cannanore belonging to him for temporary use by the Congress Satyagrahis, intent on breaking the law from 22 May to 1 June. He was charged under

21. Messrs. Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar, C. H. Govindan Nambiar, T. Subramanian Tirumumb, Lakshman Shenoy, P. C. Kuiraman Adiyodi, A. K. Warriar and Vishnu Nambisan were arrested at Payyannur. Mr. M. N. Pisharadoi and Mr. E. C. Kunhikannan Nambiar, leader of the Youth League were arrested at Badagara. Mr. P. T. Kunhanandan Nair and Mr. Ramunni Kidav were arrested at *Shakti Mandir*, the headquarters of the Kerala Yuvak Sangh at Tikkoti. Mr. L. S. Prabhu, devoted to Gandhian constructive programme at Tellicherry, was arrested under the Salt Act and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a term of six months. As the judgment was pronounced, his aged father blessed Mr. Prabhu saying "I am very happy, for serving your country for the last ten years you got an opportunity to go to jail only now." Every one in the court-hall was moved to tears. Others convicted on the same day by the same court were Messrs. P. Gopalan, Viswanath Bhat, Janardana Shenoy, Krishna Kini, Vasudeva Shenoy, and Krishnan Nambiar. Mr. T. V. Chathukutty Nair and fifteen volunteers were arrested at Payyannur and sentenced by the District Magistrate to rigorous imprisonment for one year under section 117, Cr. P. C. The police of Badagara arrested some boys who were volunteers of the *Yuvak Sangh* and as they were minors the Magistrate awarded them each two weeks' simple imprisonment. At Calicut Mr. P. Kumaran and nine others were arrested for breaking the Salt Law and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for nine months each.
22. As a protest against the cruel and discourteous treatment, Mr. P. Krishna Pillai, one of the volunteers arrested at Calicut, disobeyed some of the jail rules. He was chained in jail for two days continuously under the orders of the Superintendent. His rations were cut. The brave youth that he was, Mr. Pillai remained adamant. As his behaviour was considered to be a "bad example" to other prisoners, Mr. Pillai was transferred to the Central Jail, Vellore, along with Messrs. Muhammad Abdur Rahman, T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer and K. Malhavanar.

section 157 of I. P. C. and sentenced to pay a fine of Rs 1000 or undergo rigorous imprisonment for six weeks in default.²³

Mr. E. M. Gawne, Collector of Malabar, went to the Payyannur Satyagraha Camp, accompanied by police officials on 18 June. As the camp was being used for 'unlawful purposes' he declared it illegal under section 144 Cr. P. C. Twenty-two volunteers including the Captain, Mr. P. Kesavan Nair were taken into custody and the camp

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23. Mr. E. M. Gawne, Collector of Malabar, requested Mr. Samuel Aaron to evict the Satyagrahis on the threat of prosecution, Mr. Aaron replied that he was willing to face the prosecution though, he added, he could not guess what offence he had committed, for, the Congress had not been yet declared to be an unlawful organisation. On 12 July he was asked to answer the charges against him before the court of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Tellicherry. The popularity of the charitable landlord and industrialist naturally attracted several people to the court. Mr. Aaron declared that he had committed no criminal offence and that the prosecution witnesses were giving perjured evidence.

As Mr. Aaron refused to pay the fine he was taken in car to the Central Jail, Cannanore. More than three thousand people cheered him in a peaceful manner. A few ran up to him with garlands in their hands. As the Deputy Superintendent of Police did not permit them to put the garlands on his body, they tried to put them on his car. Thereupon the enraged officer ordered a lathi charge on the people many of whom were injured. On 18 July the Payyannur police went to the weaving factory owned by Mr. Samuel Aaron at Pazhayangadi with a distraint warrant for attaching his movable property to realise the fine of Rs 1000 imposed on him. They took cartloads of things found in the factory. But none came forward to lend a helping hand to the police who had offered high rates of wages to carry them to the police station. Finally the police themselves had to carry the articles on their heads and shoulders. Mr. Aaron appealed to the District Judge, North Malabar, to set aside the lower court's order though he had already undergone the sentence by serving the term of imprisonment. But the District Judge only confirmed the lower court's decision. Mr. Aaron later appealed to the High Court, Madras, and Justice Jackson who heard the appeal set aside the lower court's decision. In his judgment he observed: "There is no doubt that the accused harboured the volunteers in his house. But if he is to be charged under sect. 157 the volunteers ought to have been persons employed for wages or payments. There is no evidence to show that the volunteers were such." The learned judge observed further, "The Inspector of Police states that the volunteers were appointed by their leader on emoluments. In that case, a cricket captain also would be organising his team on the same lines."

was sealed.²⁴ The volunteers were sentenced to undergo simple imprisonment for one month. All public meetings were prohibited within the Payyannur town under section 144 Cr. P. C. Mr. M. P. Sarvothama Pai, Mr. M. P. Kunhiraman Nambiar and four other volunteers who attempted to violate the order were arrested and awarded nine months' rigorous imprisonment each.

Early morning on 22 June, the Satyagrahi volunteers joined by students went in procession to the beach at Calicut to break the Salt Law. Mr. Bulkley and other police officers had already taken position there. Mr. Bulkley was provoked by the high spirit and enthusiasm of the volunteers and he ordered a lathi charge on the crowd that had already gathered. Lathis, stout canes and heavy boots had a free play for nearly half an hour after which the volunteers were arrested²⁵ and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

There were numerous arrests in the different parts of Malabar, particularly at Calicut, Tellicherry and Payyannur. Mr. Moidu Moulvi, leader of the Satyagraha camp at Calicut, was arrested at his residence and Mr. T. Harisvaran Tirumumb at Payyannur and both were condemned to prison. On 28 June, the second Satyagraha camp at Payyannur and the camp at Calicut were both declared unlawful. Every Sunday was observed as Salt Satyagraha Day in Malabar when law was broken in many places. The arrests of the volunteers continued in full swing.²⁶ On 2 July a campaign was launched to picket the shops which were selling foreign cloths, particularly in Palghat and Cannanore. The propaganda

24. Mr. Nilakanta Iyer, the leader of the Satyagrahis, condemned the official action as lawless. He and other volunteers who were out picketing the toddy shops found the camp sealed and resorted to a temporary camp provided by Dr. Ganesh Pai. Dr. Pai was subsequently arrested and sentenced to undergo six months' rigorous imprisonment and pay a fine of Rs 100 for having given shelter to the breakers of law.

25. One of the arrested volunteers was Mr. P. Kuttikrishna Panikkar, a student of Ganpat High School, Calicut. He had received several blows and kicks, yet he refused to express regret. Later on 7 July after release from the jail he addressed a public meeting at the Calicut beach whereupon a large contingent of armed police under five officers rushed to the spot. The police made a charge on the crowd and singled out Mr. Panikkar and beat him mercilessly until he fell down unconscious.

26. One of the arrested volunteers at Payyannur was a very young student, M. P. Govindan Nambiar. He refused to give any undertaking regarding his future conduct and asserted that he would offer Satyagraha again and again. He was awarded one month's imprisonment.

in favour of prohibition was very active at Payyannur and produced desired results to some extent.²⁷

Meanwhile on 30 June, the Government of India had declared the All-India Congress Working Committee as an unlawful body. Pandit Nehru, President of the Congress, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The *Swaraj Bhavan*, the headquarters of the Congress at Allahabad, was sealed by the police. In a message that she sent from London to the new President, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Annie Besant offered to serve the Congress actively. These developments produced their own repercussions in Kerala and served to sharpen the righteous indignation of the people.

In every part of India the violation of law sponsored by the Indian National Congress on the one hand and the Government's policy of repression on the other were increasing in intensity day by day. The movement, gathering momentum, brought more and more people into the field. Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, realised that repression would only alienate the sympathies of the Moderates in the country. On 9 July, 1930 he announced, at a joint session of the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of State, that the object of the Round Table Conference proposed to be held at London in October was to "reach solutions that both countries and all parties and interests in them can honourably accept;" it would also "form the basis of the proposals which His Majesty's Government will later submit to Parliament." At a meeting of the prominent members of the Nationalist and Independent Parties of both the Legislative Chambers held on 14 July, it was decided to authorise Mr. M. R. Jayakar to take proper steps for resolving the prevailing impasse in the country. The negotiations held by Sir Tej Bahadur Sempu and Mr. M. R. Jayakar with Gandhiji, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at the Yeravada Jail were being watched by the entire country with anxiety. The Indian leaders felt that the language used by the Viceroy was too vague and that

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27. Incensed at the brutal ways of the police, the weaver community of Payyannur who formed a considerable section of the population resolved at a general meeting not to resort to intoxicants in future. On 24 June, the toddy-shop owner of Annur in Payyannur assaulted Mr. P. K. Ramakrishnan, a volunteer picketing before his shop and dragged him into his shop. He also poured the unsold toddy down the head of Mr. K. Rama Panikkar, another volunteer. This incident excited the people of Payyannur. On the intervention of the popular leaders, however, all the vendors of the town signed Prohibition pledges declaring that they would neither bid at the subsequent auctions nor give their own trees for tapping. On this undertaking, the picketing of the Equor shops was temporarily suspended at Payyannur.

they could not say anything authoritative without reference to a properly convened meeting of the Congress Working Committee and, if necessary, of the All India Congress Committee. They would be satisfied with nothing less than the recognition of India's right to secede at will from the British empire, the establishment of a national Government responsible to the people of India and the right to refer to an independent tribunal such British claims and concessions as might seem to the national Government to be unjust and injurious to the interests of the country. Anyway, the peace negotiations fell to the ground.

Even while the negotiations were going on, repression and arrests continued in full vigour in Malabar. Orders under section 144 were brought into force at Calicut and at Cannanore.²⁸ On the arrest of Mr. P. Achuthan, one of the highly influential Congress leaders of Calicut, and Mr. P. Moideen Koya, a hartal was spontaneously observed, as a result of which the timber business at Kallai and Mooriyad recorded a complete stoppage of work. Mr. Achuthan in a stirring message exhorted the people, specially the members of the Tiya community, to follow the precepts of Sri Narayana Guru Swamikal and pin their faith to Prohibition completely. Messrs. K. Madhavan Nair, President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, U. Gopala Menon and S. Nilakanta Iyer were subsequently arrested on 9 July. The news spread like wild fire and people in large numbers flocked near the police station because the arrested leaders were universally respected for their patriotism, fighting spirit and courage of convictions. They were convicted by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Calicut, for different terms of rigorous imprisonment.²⁹ Though Calicut had been subjected to the prohibitory order under Section 144, the town observed a spontaneous hartal in protest against the conviction of the leaders, in spite of the severe warning administered by the police.

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28. At Kallai, Calicut, the volunteers who were picketing toddy shops were subjected to inhuman treatment by the police. They were dragged along the road when one of them, Mr. Kunhikrishnan Nambiar, lay flat on the ground. He was lifted by the constables on their lathis, the Sub-Inspector himself holding his neck tightly. After walking a few yards with their burden, they threw the volunteer down heavily. Such atrocities became almost a daily occurrence in different parts of Malabar, yet volunteers came forward in hundreds to break the law. At Cannanore there was a procession on 7 July and those who participated in it were manhandled by the police.
 29. Mr. Madhavan Nair charged the police before the court for tendering perjured evidence against the accused even when the latter refused to take part in the trial proceedings. He was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for five months and the other two leaders, to that for four months.

The struggle was now unleashed in general. The students³⁰ also vigorously took part in the general demonstrations. Many were the volunteers who were arrested at Calicut, Cannanore, Payyannur and other places. The police became more brutalised than ever.³¹

On 20 July, 1930 Mr. T. Hassan Koya Mulla was elected, in the place of Mr. K. Madhavan Nair, as President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and Smt. M. Kartyayani Anna was co-opted as a member of the same body. The Civil Disobedience Movement was gaining momentum day by day. Women had already entered the political field though they did not break the law yet. The Prohibition propaganda was soon going to have a telling effect all over the District. The *Swadeshi* League at Calicut did excellent work while

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30. The students of the Native (Ganpat) High School, the Malabar Christian College, the Zamorin's College and the Himayathul Muslim High School, Calicut, came out of their institutions, met under the big banyan tree near the Zamorin's College and warned the Government of the consequences of their repressive policy. The students of the Chalapuram Girls' School, then a Middle School, went out in procession, led by the leaders of the Calicut Women's *Swadeshi* League.

At the Central Jail, Cannanore, Mr. Mohita Singh, an 'A' Class political prisoner from the Punjab, was prevented by the authorities from establishing contacts with the 'C' class political prisoners lodged in the fourth block, this led to an incident in the course of which he drew out his 'Kirpan.' Thereupon Mr. K. Santhanam and Mr. L. S. Prabhu persuaded him to create a quieter atmosphere in the jail by obeying the instructions. Next day a large gathering of students met when Mr. P. K. Kunhappa Nambiar, aged fourteen, appealed to the audience in moving terms to help the freedom movement in all possible ways.

31. At Calicut Mr. A. C. Ponnunni Raja was pushed down and dragged along the road as he was picketing a shop in the company of other volunteers. As a result of merciless beating, he fell down unconscious.

At Calicut the young student, Mr. P. Kuttikrishnan Panikkar, who had been in police custody after his address at the beach, was brought for trial before the Sub-Divisional Magistrate. He refused to give the assurance demanded by the Magistrate but told him that, while in custody, he had received more than 150 blows from the police. He was really ill and finally on the advice of friends and relatives assembled in the court hall, agreed reluctantly to be let off for six months on two sureties. He expired on 1 December 1930 after a few months of suffering. The students of Calicut observed a hartal as the sad news reached them. He was one of the early martyrs in Malabar who lost life during the critical year, 1930 when the movement was extremely vigorous.

At Payyannur also the police brutality was naked. To bring relief to the injured the Calicut *Swadeshi* League organised an Ambulance Corps.

in North Malabar the Youth League vigorously pushed forward the *swadeshi* propaganda, particularly at Cannanore.

When the time approached for the auctioning of the contract of liquor shops in Malabar, the Government realised that the continued picketing would keep away the prospective bidders and thus cause considerable loss of excise revenue. So on 21 July, 1930 the District Magistrate of Malabar passed an order under section 144 Cr. P. C., effective throughout the District, so as to prevent the Satyagrahi volunteers from picketing, obstructing, dissuading or threatening the prospective bidders of toddy shops at the auctions to be held at different places in the first two weeks of August. The owners of all hotels were asked to send out the boarders patronising them, suspected to be satyagrahi volunteers. The Satyagrahis were hunted from place to place and harassed. Anyway as a result of active propaganda, very few bidders participated in the auctions inspite of several inducements and assurances from the excise and revenue officials. The first auctioning of the toddy shops had to be postponed and even the resumed auctioning did not fare better. On the whole the Government sustained severe loss of excise revenue.

Though, as noted earlier, the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee had ordained that Satyagraha should not be carried on in certain areas of South Malabar-Ernad, Valluvanad and Ponani yet in these regions khadi and *swadeshi* work was being done by some enthusiastic young men who were rounded up by the police.³²

Early in August, 1930, a posse of armed constables went to the office of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee located in the *Mathrubhumi* buildings at Calicut and carried away some papers and documents after a vigorous search of the premises in the presence of Mr. T. Hassan Koya Mulla. Mr. Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, was arrested at Kunnamangalam, a village near Calicut, along with four volunteers under section 55 Cr. P. C. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Calicut, who was aware of Mr. Nambudiripad's high status in society was indeed surprised that he should have been charged under the Vagrants' Act (sec. 55) and so he substituted it by another charge under sec. 109 Cr. P. C. All the accused were asked to tender security for good behaviour for six months and on refusal awarded rigorous imprisonment for the same period.

32. At Perintalmanna, Mr. Vellodi, a bus conductor, who was plying a *takli* in bus was arrested. Mr. E. P. Gopalan Nair, a volunteer who was distributing some leaflets was also taken into custody. A railway passenger, on alighting from the train at Cherukara station was arrested for wearing khadi. Newspaper boys selling the *Mathrubhumi* and the *Al-Ameen* were warned by the police. This was the first time when arrests were made in Valluvanad Taluk in 1930.

The Congress had strictly banned the Civil Disobedience Movement in the Princely States. But it may be noted here that among the hundreds of Satyagrahi volunteers working in Malabar, a considerable number came from Travancore and Cochin. The struggle in Malabar, was regarded as a part of the struggle of Kerala as a whole. Many volunteers in several parts of Malabar suffered at this time; a few died as martyrs to the cause of freedom.³³

Meanwhile the news of the arrest, at Bombay, of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviva and some other members of the Congress Working Committee on 1 August had caused much excitement in Malabar. The Congress Working Committee called on the people of India to observe 10 August as Political Sufferers' Day. The leading members of the *Swadeshi* League and the *Mahila Sangh* at Calicut went round the town organising a *hartal* which was highly successful.³⁴ There were nearly fifteen convictions at Calicut. In Palghat the *hartal* was complete. Many *takli* processions were taken out which converged in the open ground in front of the Mootantara Temple.³⁵ Till now there had not been much political excitements in Palghat caused by the Government's repressive policy but with the picketing of toddy shops started by the Satyagrahi volunteers the atmosphere began to change. On 12 August for the first time in Palghat eleven volunteers were

33. Mr. Ramankutty Panikkar of Mathilakam died in the Central Jail at Cannanore on 10 August. His dead body was taken in procession and he was given an honourable cremation near the place where *Swadesabhimani* Ramakrishna Pillai and Mr. K. V. Balakrishna Menon had been cremated earlier. Another volunteer who died in the Calicut hospital was Mr. M. Gopala Panikkar of Panavally in Travancore. He died of pneumonia on 18 August.

34. The volunteers were headed by Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma, Smt. E. Narayanikutty Amma, Mrs. U. Gopala Menon and Messrs. Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair and Manjeri Subramanian who personally appealed to the owners of shops and business houses to close for the day. The sight of an open shop in Sweetmeat Bazaar and Huzur Road, the busiest centres of the town, was a rare phenomenon. The vegetable market was entirely closed. Even the petrol bunks were not open and the Manager of the Burmah Shell Company on a visit to the town, was surprised to see the Burmah Shell depots and bunks observing *hartal*. Hundreds of children under fourteen went round the town, shouting slogans in front of the town police station whereupon the police caned some of them.

35. A public meeting was held there when Messrs. P. Vasu Menon, R. Raghava Menon and K. V. Subramania Iyer addressed the gathering.

arrested and sentenced³⁶ to undergo rigorous imprisonment for seven months. After a few days, on 17 August a peaceful public meeting was held, attended by Mr. P. Moideen Koya, Mr. Syed Mohamed who was Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee (after the arrest of Mr. Nilakantan Nambudiripad) and Mr. K. A. Damodara Menon but it ended in the unnecessary use of violence by the police.³⁷ At Cannanore also there were arrests and convictions, as in all other parts of Malabar at the time. The students were most

36. The trial was held within the Sub Jail. To congratulate the fortunate volunteers a public meeting was held under the presidentship of Mr. R. Raghava Menon.
37. There was a large gathering of people, in spite of heavy rains. When Mr. Syed Mohamed began to address them, a few Muslims with Union Jack in hand tried to disturb the meeting. Thereupon Mr. R. Raghava Menon advised the assembly to disperse quietly. As the people stood up to do so, a contingent of police rushed towards them and began indiscriminate beating. The leaders including Messrs. Syed Mohamed, K. V. Subrahmania Iyer and K. A. Damodara Menon were severely beaten and arrested afterwards though none of the disturbers of peace was touched by police. A Head Constable went to the shop of Mr. N. Subrahmania Iyer, a sympathiser of the Satyagraha movement and without any apparent provocation dragged him out and beat him with a lathi. Mr. P. Moideen Koya was subsequently arrested at Calicut under Sections 144 and 185 C. P. C., as well as Mr. R. Raghava Menon. The arrested leaders were tried by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate in the Palghat fort. The accused gave statements establishing the perjured nature of the evidence given by the witnesses. Mr. Syed Mohamed narrated how he, along with Mr. Guruvayurappan Naidu, had been persecuted by the police and most violently dealt with. The kick given to him by Mr. Amu Saheb, Deputy Superintendent of Police, had been most vicious. All the accused were sentenced to nine months' rigorous imprisonment and taken to the Central Jail, Coimbatore. As long as the judiciary was subordinate to the Executive in the absence of separation of powers, the Magistrates were expected to exercise their discretionary powers in cases involving the interests of the Government. They had to award maximum punishment envisaged by the sections of law under which charges were framed against individuals. Those who awarded just sentences under dictates of conscience were viewed with disfavour by the Government. Numerous instances of such subservience of the judiciary to the Executive can be substantiated by a study of the records. In the absence of any prohibitory order the citizens had a legitimate right to hold a public meeting peacefully and there was absolutely no necessity for any of the police excesses.

enthusiastic about the movement.³⁸ Mr. P. K. Kunhappa Nambiar was charged under Sec. 124 C. P. C. and awarded one year's rigorous imprisonment by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Tellicherry. At Azhikode near Cannanore, Mr. Govindan who had resigned his job of Teacher to become a Satyagrahi was arrested for picketing a toddy shop belonging to his own uncle.

Meanwhile when the news of the arrests of national leaders and members of the Congress Working Committee came on 27 August, a spontaneous hartal was again observed in many parts of Malabar.³⁹ The Government of Madras had fixed 9 September as the date of elections to the Madras Legislative Assembly, but the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee decided to boycott the elections in protest against the Government's repressive policy. The Satyagraha Committee made necessary arrangement for the peaceful picketing of the polling booths whereupon the Government through the Picketing Ordinance, made picketing an offence. In spite of persuasion and pressure the number of those who exercised their franchise was very small.⁴⁰ The picketing of elections was naturally accompanied by a large number of arrests.

In view of the pledge given by them to the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, most of the former licensees of liquor shops in Malabar had shown little interest in bidding again at the public auctions. New bidders also were reluctant to come forward and take the risk of possible financial loss through picketing and social boycott. The Government now called for sealed tenders for the auctioning of liquor shops but this expedient also did not improve matters.

It was at this juncture that an unfortunate incident happened at the Central Jail, Cannanore. On 7 September, 1930 a tri-colour

38. The Headmaster of the Municipal High School, Cannanore, forcibly removed a Gandhi cap worn by a student named Namadeva Shenoy. The boy's guardian threatened to take legal action against the Headmaster whereupon the latter returned the cap to the student after getting a signed receipt from him. The Headmaster's action provoked a large number of students who attended the classes on the next day wearing Gandhi caps. The Headmaster of the Raja's High School at Chirakal also provoked the students in his institution to similar action whereupon he covered his embarrassment with a broad grin.

39. The students at Calicut went out in procession, carrying black flags and resorted to picketing at the Zamorin's College and the Ganpat High School.

40. Out of the 3,313 voters within the Calicut Municipal area only 315 registered their votes. In other parts of the District also, the voters revealed their sympathy for the struggle for freedom.

flag was seen flying in the jail block where some political prisoners were interned. The authorities, after investigations, put the person responsible for it to chains. Other political prisoners protested against this inhuman treatment extended to their compatriot. At night, in utter darkness, a lathi charge was therefore made on the prisoners as punishment. Mr. K. Nilakanthan Nambudiripad was dragged out of the room and severely beaten.⁴¹ All political prisoners in the jail went on hunger strike for a few days as a protest against the repressive policy. Further the prisoners, with convictions for one year and more, were required to give finger-prints by the police under Act 33 of 1920. Twentynine prisoners⁴² refused to oblige the authorities whereupon they were charged under section 186 I. P. C. and tried by the Sub-Magistrate, Cannanore, who held his court in the Central Jail itself for the purpose. The accused in a lengthy statement questioned the validity of the Act in their case stating that it had been intended for thieves, robbers and murderers. On 16 October the Magistrate sentenced them to two weeks' imprisonment. In other jails also there was agitation in regard to the finger prints. Later however the Inspector General of Prisons, Madras issued an order by which they were not to be insisted on in future in the case of political prisoners.

On 2 October, 1930 Gandhiji's birthday was celebrated all over Malabar, with a programme including the violation of Salt Law and the hawking of khadi. At Calicut, on that day, four Satyagrahis proceeded to the beach to manufacture salt, followed by a large

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41. When the news leaked out some non-official visitors went to the Central Jail to make enquiries. The Jail Superintendent informed them that the prisoners had assaulted the warders. He even showed them the marks of blood on some of the "injured" warders. On examination the "blood" was found to be nothing more than red ink.

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, meeting at Calicut, appointed a committee to take steps for the institution of an enquiry into the incidents in the Central Jail. It consisted of Messrs. T. Hassan Koya Mulla (President) T. V. Sundara Iyer, Potheri Madhavan, C. Samuel Aaron and P. K. Kunhisankara Menon (*The Champion* dated 18-9-1930).

42. They were Messrs. M. Svayaprakash Rao (Andhra), T. V. Chathukutty Nair, K. T. Kunhiraman Nambiar, P. V. Padmanabha Pillai, P. T. Kunhanandan Nair, K. M. Damodaran Nair, A. K. Sekhara Pisharodi, Krishna Panikkar, P. V. Thomas, M. Gopala Kurup, M. Ramunni Kidav, P. Kesava Pillai, P. Krishnan Nair, M. Chathan, M. V. Chandukutty Nambiar, C. K. Ponnappan, K. G. Balakrishnan Pillai, O. K. Gopalan Kartha, P. K. Ramakrishnan, A. C. Ponnunni Raja, M. P. Kunhiraman Nambiar, C. K. Govindan, T. Krishnan, A. P. Syed Mohamed Kannu, P. Krishna Kurup, P. Govindan, Suryanarayana Sharma (Andhra) and Dr. Narasimha Rao (Andhra).

number of people. At the big bazaar a posse of Reserve Police, headed by Mr. Bulkely, District Superintendent of Police, pounced upon them without any warning and began a lathi charge. Mr. Bulkely ran about viciously kicking people with his boots and beating the nearest available victim. Those who fell on the road were ruthlessly kicked and beaten again and again.⁴³ The War Council of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee had already notified their intention to take out a huge procession on the same evening. The people, familiar with the ruthless behaviour of Mr. Bulkely ever since the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement, were naturally anxious now about the final outcome of the procession, organised on a large scale. As it was *Vijayadasami* Day a holiday crowd also was expected to join the procession. The police spread a rumour that they would resort to shooting as there was already a prohibitory order in force. However even from noon, hundreds of people literally flowed into Calicut town from the neighbouring villages. It was a mass of humanity, the like of which had never before been witnessed in Calicut. They lined before the *Mathrubhumi* Buildings in which the Congress office was located ready to be victimised by the police. The procession started at 3.30 p. m. Mr. K. Madhava Menon, Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee carrying in front a huge portrait of Gandhiji.⁴⁴ Shouts of *Vande Mataram* and *Gandhiji ki Jai* rent the air. Slowly, gracefully and in orderly fashion, the procession moved through the gaily decorated streets and reached the beach; and by another route it returned reaching the Congress office by sunset. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Mr. M. P. Narayanan Nair, accompanied the procession all the way. The police force was conspicuous by its absence and there was no untoward incident.

The arrest of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 19 October 1930 under a charge of sedition raised again a storm of protest throughout Malabar. The merchants of Calicut, particularly those of the Gujarati community, decided not to celebrate the happy *Dipavali* festival on a grand scale, as they used to do, in protest against the Government's repressive policy. The dark *Dipavali* was symbolic of the righteous indignation of a determined people.

43. Two volunteers had to be removed to the Headquarters Hospital, Calicut, on account of grievous injuries that they sustained. Many others had to be helped to go to the Congress office.

44. He was flanked by Mr. T. Hassan Koya Mulla, President, Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, and Mr. K. Raman Menon, both holding high the tri-colour flag that fluttered in the afternoon breeze.

Meanwhile an order under Section 141 Cr. P. C. prohibiting the premises being used by Satyagrahi volunteers" was affixed by the police on the door of the office of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee that was functioning in the *Matrubhumi* buildings, Calicut. There were frequent raids on the Congress office in course of which scores of volunteers were arrested. Messrs. T. Hassan Koya Mulla, K. Madhava Menon, P. K. Kunhisankara Menon, and E. Gopala Panikkar, President, Secretary and members of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee respectively were arrested, along with Mr. P. Achuthan on 5 November, for having violated the prohibitory order.⁴⁵

Ever since the movement had started in Malabar, Mr. K. Madhava Menon and Mr. K. Raman Menon,⁴⁶ enjoying lucrative practice at the Calicut Bar, had been the two leaders who organised and gave proper direction to it. In fact the main centre of the Satyagraha movement in Kerala during 1930 was Calicut where volunteers from other parts gathered on various campaigns—Salt Satyagraha, Prohibition, khadi work and violations of prohibitory orders. The Satyagraha had been entirely peaceful and it should be stated that the Collector of Malabar, Mr. E. M. Gawne, had shown considerable prudence in not permitting the police to beat the volunteers with lathis in the early days. To avoid any disturbance to peace, particularly on

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45. On 19 October the police arrested twelve volunteers found at the office of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. They were Messrs. K. Gopala Pillai (Captain), P. Sankara Marar (Kurumbranad), C. P. Vasudevan Nambisan (Alwaye), M. A. Krishna Pillai (Travancore), K. V. Rama Warriar (Travancore), T. K. Kunhisankaran Nair (Badagara), P. Korukutty (Nanmanda), C. V. Gopala Pillai (Quilon), M. Bhaskara Panikkar (Ponani), A. K. Kumaran Kutty Nair, T.P. Gopala Pillai (Travancore), and K. Choyi. Soon after their arrest another flag was seen hoisted above the Congress office, apart from the one that the police seized.
 46. The case against them, except Mr. Madhava Menon, was heard by the Sub-Magistrate, Calicut. Mr. Achuthan and Mr. Kunhisankara Menon cross-examined the prosecution witness at length and argued their cases. Mr. Achuthan, in his statement, refuted the evidence of the Sub-Inspector of Police and said that the case had been deliberately foisted on him by the Government; the latter had not like his activities as a member of the Excise Licensing Board, of which the District Collector was the Chairman. The police and the excise officials probably desired to get rid of him so that they could have a free hand in the affairs of the Board. The Magistrate, accepting the statement of Mr. Achuthan, acquitted him. The other accused were awarded four months' rigorous imprisonment each.
 47. Mr. Menon later died when he was Minister in the first national Government in Madras.

the occasion of the visit of the Governor of Madras to Malabar,⁴⁸ the Congress, on its part had wisely decided that no volunteers should go out in batches of more than four and that no assembly of more than four should be held. But unfortunately in spite of the wisdom and patience of the District Magistrate, the District Superintendent of Police took the law into his own hands and indulged in a violent suppression of the Satyagrahis. Again, it was the same District Magistrate who instructed the Sub-Divisional Magistrate that the procession taken out on Gandhi Jayanthi Day should neither be dispersed nor disturbed unless it was proved to be violent in character. Much of the police excesses happened only after the unfortunate transfer of Mr. Gawne from the District.⁴⁹ It was indeed a matter of credit that in spite of the depressing repercussions of the Moplah rebellion of 1921, Malabar was able, when the call came, to rise to the occasion and hold the banner of the country aloft.

48. On 27 September 1930 the Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee called upon the public to take part in a procession at Calicut. His object was apparently to ascertain the extent of support that could be expected from the people at the time of the intended demonstrations on the occasion of the visit of the Governor. The procession started from the Congress office on 2 October, the birthday of Gandhiji, and the number of the participators gradually swelled to 4000 or 5000.
49. Speech of Mr. K. P. Raman Menon in Madras Legislative Council, in support of the adjournment motion moved by Mr. Sami Venkitachalam Chetty to discuss the atrocities committed by the police in many parts of the Madras Presidency. (*Mathrubhumi* dated 22-11-1930).

CHAPTER 19

ERA OF DICTATORS

Even as the Government was adopting stern measures to put down the freedom struggle, negotiations were being conducted for the meeting of the first Round Table Conference in London with the professed object of settling the constitutional problem of India. The British Government was bent upon holding the Conference in spite of the firm stand against it taken by Gandhiji and the Congress High Command. Leaders representing different interests in India were invited to participate in it. The Conference was inaugurated on 12 November, 1930. The British Government was quite aware that, without the Congress, the Conference would be an empty show and that any settlement with others would be practically ineffective. The Conference sat for a few days and was adjourned *sine die* on 19 January, 1931. It had accomplished little. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, the British Prime Minister, wound up the Conference by a speech in the course of which he made the following announcement:

"The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances and also with guarantees as are required by Ministers to protect their political liberties and rights. In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of transitional period it will be a primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new constitution to full responsibility for her own government.

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His Majesty's Government, in view of the Character of the Conference and of the limited scope at its disposal in London, has deemed it advisable to suspend its work at this point so that the Indian opinion may be consulted upon the work done and the expedient considered for overcoming the difficulties which have been raised. His Majesty's Government will consider without delay a plan by which our co-operation may be continued so that the results of our contemplated work may be

seen in a new Indian constitution. If, in the meantime, there is a response to the Viceroy's appeal to those engaged at present in Civil Disobedience and others wish to co-operate on the general lines of this declaration, steps will be taken to enlist their services."

The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress met at Allahabad on 21 January, 1931 with Babu Rajendra Prasad in the chair. They felt that the Prime Minister's declaration was "too vague and general to justify any change in the policy of the Congress." But as desired by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. M. R. Jayakar and Rt. Hon'ble V. S. Srinivasa Sastri who had attended the Round Table Conference, the publication of this resolution was withheld until their return to India.

To protest against the cruel treatment meted out by the police to the women Satyagrahis of Bombay, some ladies of high social standing in Calicut announced their intention to take out a procession on Jawahar day, 16 November, 1930. On the previous day, the District Magistrate served on them, 'as well as a few gentlemen,' orders under sec. 144 Cr. P. C. by which the ladies were prohibited from taking out processions and holding meetings and the gentlemen from helping them in their intended violation of law. Yet early morning on the appointed day several ladies assembled at Verkot House in Talj, Calicut, dressed in spotless khadi. A large crowd was present in the neighbourhood. The police force under Rao Bahadur K. Nilakantan Nair Circle Inspector of Police, Calicut, reached the place and lined up a few yards away on the road in front of Verkot House. The arrival of Mr. M. P. Narayanan Nair, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, appeared to be the signal for the ladies to start the procession. Smt. Narayani Amma of Verkot House, her aged mother and other elderly ladies present, blessed the young women who were getting ready to defy the law and court arrest. Tri-colour flags fluttered high in the early morning breeze. The ladies, as they stepped out, were stopped by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate but they were determined to march

1. The ladies, on whom notices were served, were Miss. M. Kartyayani Amma, Mrs. K. Madhavan Nair, Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma, Miss. K. E. Sharada, Smt. T. Narayani Amma, Smt. P. G. Narayani Amma, Miss. E. Narayanikutty Amma, Mrs. T. V. Sundara Iyer and Mrs. Gracy Aaron.
2. They were Messrs. C. Samuel Aaron, Kadampat Kittunni Menon, U. Gopala Menon, M. Govinda Menon, T. V. Sundara Iyer, P. Achuthan and P. I. Kaimal.

forward.³ Orders were finally given for the arrest of the women leaders.⁴ They were taken in a police van to the Special Sub-Jail, Calicut. This was the first occasion on which women were arrested in Kerala in the cause of the freedom movement. The accused did not take part in the trial proceedings which were held after two days. After evidence for the prosecution was tendered by the Inspector of Police the Magistrate sentenced them all except Smt. Kartyayani Amma to undergo imprisonment till the rising of the court.⁵

The students of most of the schools and colleges in Calicut observed hartal on Monday, 17 November in protest against the

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3. The Inspector of Police tried to snatch away the tri-colour flag from the hands of the teen-aged Jayalakshmi, the spirited daughter of Mr. T. V. Sundara Iyer. But the fearless girl, looking steadily at the Inspector said "I will not part with this." The Inspector tried his hand on others also but every one remained stiff. Full-throated and spirited shouts of Jais reverberated in the air.
 4. Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma, Smt. E. Narayanikutty Amma, Mrs. Gracy Aaron, Smt. Kunhikavu Amma, Smt. T. Ammukutty Amma and the school girl, Jayalakshmi were arrested amidst thunderous cries from the thousands assembled to witness the scene. On reaching the jail, Jayalakshmi, being a minor, was let off under orders of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate.
 5. The trial of educated ladies of high social status naturally attracted a crowd on 18 November to the vicinity of the Magistrate's Court though the police had tried to make the time and place of the trial a secret from the public. The ladies were produced before Mr. C. J. Paul, Additional District Magistrate, Calicut sitting in the Stationary Sub-Magistrate's Court, vigilantly guarded by a strong police force. Smt. Kartyayani Amma, Smt. Narayanikutty Amma, and Mrs. Aaron were charged under sections 145 and 188 Cr. P. C., and Smts. Kunhikavu Amma and Ammukutty Amma, under section 145 Cr. P. C. The Magistrate asked Smt. Kartyayani Amma to give security for good behaviour. On refusal she was sentenced to two months' simple imprisonment. In pronouncing judgement, the Magistrate remarked that "this was the first time women in Malabar join the political movement" and hoped that they would not do so again. Smt. Kartyayani Amma alone was taken to jail.

arrest of the ladies.⁶ There were similar demonstrations in many other places also, in Malabar and Cochin.

When Mr. T. Hassan Koya Mulla was arrested he nominated Mr. C. Samuel Aaron as his successor to the office of President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. Hereafter the movement began to take an intense form. Mr. K. Madhava Menon, its Secretary, was tried by the Additional District Magistrate, Calicut, on 18 November 1930, and sentenced to four months' rigorous imprisonment for having violated the ban under sec. 144 Cr. P. C. The War Council of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee decided to observe 24 November as All-Kerala Boycott Day because the undertaking given previously by the leading piece-goods merchants in Malabar had been broken by some of them. It was proposed to organise processions and picketing of foreign cloth shops in all important places in the District. Thereupon prohibitory orders were served on several Congressmen, including Mr. Samuel Aaron. Yet the picketing commenced on the date already fixed. The authorities, it must be stated, behaved with considerable self-restraint and avoided unnecessary violence.⁷ From December onwards,

6. The students of the Government School of Commerce, Calicut were foremost in organising the strike. Not a single student attended classes in the Municipal Girls' School at Chalapuram; all the girls, led by Jayalakshmi, went out in a procession and rounded the compound of the Special Sub-Jail where the arrested ladies had been kept. Another procession of boys was taken out by the members of the *Bala Bharat Sangh* and the students of the Zamorin's College, Malabar Christian College, Ganpat High School, Himayatul Muslim High School and the Government School of Commerce participated in it.
7. To observe the Boycott Day, a huge procession was taken out at Calicut led by Messrs. Samuel Aaron M. Govinda. Menon and K. Kittunni Menon. At the beach a public meeting was held when Mr. C. J. Paul, Additional District Magistrate, and Mr. Elliot, the new District Superintendent of Police, arrived on the scene. All the above leaders as well as Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar and Mr. K. Damodaran were taken by Mr. Paul in his car and let off at Chalapuram.

They were afterwards charged with the violation of the prohibitory order and sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment each.

The picketing of the shops had been continuing from to day. Sometimes Mr. Warriar and Mr. Damodaran used to lie down on the road before the shops. On 30 November, two Englishmen, on a visit to Calicut, forcibly snatched away the tri-colour flags from the hands of the volunteers. As a protest against this high-handedness, tri-colour flags were flown, on the call of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, before almost all shops, business houses and even residential buildings in

many pickets came to be arrested at Calicut almost every day. At Cannanore the picketing was organised by the *Desa Sevak Sangh*. Orders were issued in many villages in North Malabar like Kalliasseri, Pappinisseri, Kannapuram and Cherukunnu prohibiting public meetings, processions and picketing from 6 December 1930 onwards but the ban was defied by the Congress workers who were arrested and unfortunately ill-treated by the police.³

The Government was being supported by the die-hard *Mitavadi* of Calicut, edited by Mr. C. Krishnan. In an Editorial published on 28 November, the authorities were urged to use stronger measures to put down the Civil Disobedience Movement in Malabar.⁴ Anyway the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and the War Council at Calicut were declared by a notification in the *Fort St. George Gazette* issued on 6 December 1930⁵ to be unlawful associations under sec. 16 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act as amended by the Devolution Act of 1920.

On 11 December 1930 it was resolved to dissolve both the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and the War Council and to

Calicut and other parts of Malabar. On 1 December one of the big merchants announced that he would not trade in foreign cloth in future. The new *Swadeshi Shop* opened by Mr. Samuel Aaron was proving to be quite popular. Four wholesale dealers at Calicut subsequently gave an undertaking not to buy foreign cloth.

8. The volunteers intended to take out a procession from the precincts of the Board Higher Elementary School at Kalliasseri in defiance of the ban. On 7 December the police arrived at the school and took Mr. M. P. Govindan Nambiar, a prominent worker, to the Ballapatam police station after giving him severe blows.
9. Mr. K. P. Raman Menon, Member, Madras Legislative Council and leader of the Calicut Bar, gave a spirited reply to the Editorial, condemning the unwarranted and unpatriotic advice that might pave the way to a situation creating more disturbance and blood-shed in the country.
10. The entire population of Calicut seemed to have plunged in the boycott campaign. The embarrassed Collector, Mr. E. C. Wood, wrote to the Government of Madras in his fortnightly report on 2 December, 1930 that the "people of Calicut who know that picketing has been forbidden see it being carried on day by day". (Letter dated 2.12.1930 from E. C. Wood to the Government of Madras). The pickets, stationed within the shop premises, were committing no offence except under section 188 I.P.C. and this was not a cognisable offence. The police could not intervene until a complaint had been made to the Magistrate. The Collector suggested that stern action should be taken against the bodies that enlisted volunteers and controlled their activities.

appoint a Dictator to be in entire command of the Satyagraha in Kerala. Mr. Potheri Madhavan was nominated as the first Dictator, In case of arrest, the Dictator was to nominate the successor.

A posse of the Armed Reserve raided the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee office, functioning in the *Mathrubhumi* buildings and took away the name-board and a tri-colour flag. Mr. N. Krishnan Nair, Manager of the *Mathrubhumi*, was asked to remove two flags flying on the top of the office but he refused to oblige.¹¹ On 12 December also, the police raided the office of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and in spite of protests, took away some account books, records and photographs.

Everyday several volunteers were being arrested under the Vagrants Acts for picketing shops. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Day was celebrated on 13 December in Malabar. On that day Mr. Potheri Madhavan accompanied by Messrs. P. Ummer Kunhi, A. K. Gopalan Nambiar and A. K. Kunhikrishnan Nambiar marched to the Calicut beach to hold a public meeting but all of them were arrested, charged under sec. 17 (1) Cr. P. C. and awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Calicut.

The first instance of a sentence of whipping on the Satyagrahis was when Mr. K. P. Karumakara Menon, Stationary Sub-Magistrate, Calicut sentenced, on 22 December, two Satyagrahi volunteers, P. Velu and Appu, who were minors to be whipped for having picketed foreign-cloth shops.¹²

A public meeting was held at Vilakumtara *Maidan*, Cannanore, to observe Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel day, which however was dispersed by a large contingent of police. When the intensity of caning became unbearable, the volunteers sat down. Mr. P. M. Kunhiraman Nambiar, President, Chirakal Taluk Congress Committee, who had

11. The Inspector of Police threatened that the entire building would be sealed as it was being used by an unlawful organisation. Mr. Nair offered to place the matter before the Board of Directors for their decision. Meanwhile the President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee sent intimation that that body declared to be an unlawful one was already dissolved and that their office in the *Mathrubhumi* building was being vacated.

12. The *Mathrubhumi* (dated 23 December) took exception to the sentence awarded by the Sub-Magistrate as a relic of the barbarous days. The paper also referred to the view of the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calicut that such punishments should be deemed illegal and added that an uncivilised system of punishment should not be allowed to continue simply because the Satyagrahis would undergo it without protest.

been previously served with a notice under sec. 144 Cr. P. C. was beaten black and blue. Mr. Nambiar, Mr. P. Achuthan, Volunteer Captain, and a few volunteers were arrested and sentenced afterwards to one year's rigorous imprisonment. Mr. C. H. Govindan Nambiar, an ardent khadi worker was arrested at Payyannur along with Mr. Unnaman Unithiri, Manager of the local Khadi Store, on 29 December. There were several instances of such arrests.¹³

Mr. T. Raghava Kurup, the second Dictator, appealed to the people to observe 4 January 1931 as Flag Day. Accompanied by Mr. P. K. Ramunni Nair and Mr. K. Krishnan Nair, he hoisted on that day the tri-colour flag on the sands at the Calicut beach in the presence of a large gathering. The cheering crowd was immediately subjected to a lathi charge as a result of which many persons received injuries. On his arrest, Mr. Raghava Kurup nominated Mrs. Gracy Aaron as the next Dictator.

Mrs. Gracy Aaron gave prior intimation to the authorities about her programme of action. On 13 January 1931 she conducted a procession to the Calicut beach, accompanied by Smt. P. Devaki Amma, Mrs. L. S. Prabhu, Mrs. Ganesh, Pai, Smt. Vedavathi Ammal and two men volunteers, Mr. K. Kumaran Nair and Mr. T. K. Ayyappan Pillai. She hoisted the tri-colour flag as the crowd sang the flag-song in chorus. There was also a bonfire of foreign cloth on their return from the beach. All the ladies and the men volunteers were arrested by the police. Calicut observed a partial hartal on that day. This was the second occasion when ladies were arrested in Malabar. The accused were charged under section 151 of I P. C. Mrs. Gracy Aaron and the two men volunteers did not take any part in the trial proceedings but the other ladies made a statement demanding maximum punishment for themselves. All of them were awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment and asked to give security for good behaviour for six months after release from jail.¹⁴

As a part of the Civil Disobedience Movement, it had been decided by Congressmen to boycott the census work of 1931. The first individual to be prosecuted for such boycott was Mr. P. M. Krishna Menon of Ramanattukara. Ferok.¹⁵

13. Messrs. Potheri Damodaran, C. H. Krishnan, Kovunni kidav, K. P. Gopalan, and P. C. Ramachandran were the prominent workers arrested at Cannanore.

14. The ladies were taken to the Presidency Jail for women at Vellore. Mrs. Ganesh Pai had a child also with her.

15. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Malappuram awarded him rigorous imprisonment for one year under section 117 I.P.C. It may be also stated that five persons who were appointed as enumerators at Ramanattukara refused to do census work.

As the number of Satyagrahis going to jail tended to increase, the Government adopted new tactics and began to keep the arrested Satyagrahis as under-trial prisoners for long periods.¹⁶

Unfortunately some of the leading piece-goods merchants who had undertaken earlier not to sell foreign cloth, went back on their promise. Their sale of foreign cloth through the back-door of their shops was detected by the volunteers. Then the merchants removed the bundles of foreign cloth to other places for secret sale. Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, who returned from jail after serving his full term of nine months, now warned the merchants of Calicut and Palghat that their shops would be picketed. A large number of volunteers resorted to fasting and courted arrest before some of the merchants finally yielded to moral pressure.¹⁷

The next Dictator, Mr. L. S. Prabhu, who had already served a term of imprisonment, was arrested at Calicut on a warrant from the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Tellicherry, on 23 January, 1931 and sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment and the payment of a fine of Rs. 100. He nominated Smt. Easwari Ammal, wife of Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, as his successor.

As a gesture of reconciliation, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, issued a statement on 25 January 1931 setting free Gandhiji and the members of the Congress Working Committee. The ban on the Working Committee was withdrawn. But this move of the Viceroy did not mean, at least for the time being, a real change of heart on the part of the British Government. The Viceroy's statement could not be expected to arrest immediately the rapid flow of Indian nationalism. In fact it was with redoubled enthusiasm that Independence Day was celebrated in Malabar on 26 January, 1931. It was characterised by big processions and mass meetings at which the people firmly pledged themselves to carry on the struggle until India would be free from the British yoke. Hundreds of arrests were effected in Malabar on that day.¹⁸

16. The number of such persons who were not brought up for trial at Calicut upto 16 January, 1931 was 90.

17. At Palghat one of the merchants, sought police protection against the pickets. At Calicut the volunteers undertook a fast before the houses of two merchants. Mr. T. Madhavan Nair led the team of volunteers who fasted. As soon as a volunteer was removed by the police, another took his place in continuous chain.

18. Thus there were numerous arrests in Cannanore, Badagara, Calicut and Palghat. At Palghat, many boys of the *Vanara Sena* picketed foreign-cloth shops in batches. The police thrashed them severely but as soon as they were let off they again picketed, thus inciting the police to more cruel action. The work of the boys really kept away customers from the shops.

The news of the demise of Pandit Motilal Nehru at Lucknow on 6 February 1931 naturally plunged the whole of Malabar in gloom as any other part of India. There was spontaneous hartal for two days all over the District. Public meetings were held to express the great popular sense of loss. The police did not interfere. Gandhiji appealed to the nation to observe 15 February as Motilal Day, giving out a programme to be followed by the country. Meanwhile Smt. Easwari Ammal, the fifth Dictator and Smt. M. K. Janaki Amma had already been arrested on the Calicut beach for breaking the Salt Law on 2 February.¹⁹ The sixth Dictator, Smt. K. Kunhilakshmi Amma and other prominent leaders²⁰ appealed to the people of Kerala to observe Motilal Day in accordance with Gandhiji's instructions. Thus Motilal Day was observed in all solemnity, even in villages with complete hartal, fasting, silent processions and peaceful condolence meetings.

Smt. K. Kunhilakshmi Amma and Smt. N. Sanjivi Bai²¹ went to the Big Bazaar, Calicut on 12 February holding the tri-colour flag high and posted themselves before a piece-goods shop. This was the first occasion on which women in Malabar undertook picketing. The ladies carried on their work in the hot sun as Gopalakrishnan, the twelve-year old son of Mr. Mukunda Pai, exhorted the anxious crowd to take to khadi. The ladies were arrested on 14 February.²²

On her arrest, Smt. Kunhilakshi Amma nominated Mrs. Margaret Pavamani, wife of Mr. Benjamin Pavamani of the Calicut Bar, as the next Dictator. Meanwhile arrests and convictions for picketing were taking place in large numbers in Palghat, Calicut and several centres in North Malabar. Mr. P. Kesavan Nair, Secretary of the Malabar District Congress Committee, was arrested at Calicut on 16 February under section 151 of I. P. C.²³ Mr. R. V. Sharma, on

19. Smt. Easwari Ammal's son, Ramachandran, a boy of fourteen, also was taken into custody. Except the boy who was let off, the two ladies and other volunteers were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one year.

20. They were Mrs. Margaret Pavamani, Messrs. K. V. Suryamarayana Iyer, P. Achuthan, Abdur Rahman, K. M. Nair, Vallabhdas Purushotham, K. Madhavan Nair and Dr. A. Chandu.

21. Smt. Kunhilakshi Amma had been a Teacher in Cochin Government Service and Smt. Sanjivi Bai, a Teacher under the Malabar District Board. They had resigned their jobs to join the Satyagraha movement.

22. The ladies were remanded in jail for a fortnight. They were tried on 28 February and awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Calicut.

23. He was awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment. This was his third conviction since the movement had started in Malabar in April, 1930.

his return from jail, fasted for three successive days at Vatakkantara Temple, Palghat, praying to the deity to effect a change of heart on the part of those merchants who were selling foreign cloth. After Mr. Sharma's fast Mr. Krishna Menon fasted there for eight days and Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, for three days. Mr. Manakulam Krishna Raja and Mr. Sekharan Nair of Chelakkara, Cochin State, who had earlier resigned his lucrative job in Colombo, were arrested at Palghat for picketing and sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment.²⁴ Under the joint auspices of *Bala Bharat Sangh* and *Balika Sangh*, a large procession of boys and girls led by Miss Jayalakshmi and Miss P. G. Swarnakumari went along the important roads of Calicut on 25 February singing national songs and plying on *takkis*. In response to the call of Mrs. Margaret Pavamani, shops, streets and residential houses in all important places in Malabar were decorated with tri-colour flags on 27 February. Vigorous house-to-house propaganda was conducted in North Malabar by the members of the *Yuvak Sangh* and *Desa Senika Sangh*, headed by Mr. E. C. Kunhikannan Nambiar, Smt. Kartyayani Amma and Smt. Matilda Kallen.

On the day on which Pandit Motilal Nehru passed away a large group of Indian delegates landed in Bombay, after having attended the Round Table Conference. Among them were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. M. R. Jayakar and Mr. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri who went to Allahabad where Gandhiji was staying. They discussed the political situation with Gandhiji and successfully persuaded him to negotiate with the Viceroy. After prolonged talks, started on 17 February 1931, Gandhiji and the Viceroy were able to affix, on 5 March, their signature to the Delhi Pact, more popularly known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.²⁵

According to the Pact, the Civil Disobedience Movement was to be "effectually discontinued" and amnesty given to those who were convicted in connection with it. Administrative concession was given to make and sell salt for people's own use in salt-producing villages. Peaceful picketing was to be allowed. Ordinances were to be withdrawn. Properties confiscated or attached earlier were to be restored to the owners except under special circumstances. The trade in British goods was to continue undisturbed. As regards constitutional questions, there was to be further discussion of the scheme already outlined at the Round Table Conference. In this scheme, the formation of an Indian

24. This was his fourth conviction since the movement began.

25. It was on 2 March 1930 that Gandhiji sent his famous letter to the Viceroy through Mr. Reginald Reynolds. Therefore the Pact came almost exactly after one year.

federation was an essential part; so also were executive responsibility and safeguards in the interests of India in such matters as defence, external affairs, position of minorities, financial credit and discharge of obligations.

The Congress Working Committee, meeting immediately, endorsed the terms of this "provisional settlement" and sent detailed telegraphic instructions to the Provincial Congress Committees to take suitable action without delay.

The news of the Pact was welcomed in Kerala. On 6 March Mrs. Margaret Pavamani, the seventh Dictator and other leaders²⁶ issued a communique calling on the people to observe the terms of the Delhi Pact strictly and not to break law, including prohibitory orders issued under section 144 Cr. P. C. wherever they were in force.

On 7 March 1931 public meetings were held and processions taken to celebrate the event all over Kerala. At Calicut a huge procession was organised by the *Bala Bharat Sangh*, the *Balika Sangh*, the *Mahila Sangh* and the Students' League. At the mammoth meeting, held at the beach and presided over by Smt. Margaret Pavamani, Mr. T. Prakasam, the great Andhra leader who had been released on the previous day from the Central Jail, Cannanore, congratulated Kerala on the splendid part played by her in the historic movement.²⁷ He added, without any fear of contradiction, that Malabar had contributed much more to the success of the movement than any other part of Southern India. A few days earlier, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya had already paid a similar tribute to Malabar. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, in a message sent to the President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee on 12 March expressed his great admiration for the services rendered by the brave sons and daughters of the soil. He stated, "Kerala had excelled the other Provinces this time. And the leaders of Kerala can rightly be proud of the great part their Province had played in this great struggle."²⁸

Now that it was allowed by the Delhi Pact, there was again organised picketing of foreign-cloth shops and liquor-shops in Malabar immediately after the release of the leaders and volunteers from jail. This state of affairs continued, without a break, till the next stage of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932. In remote villages in Malabar District even young men who did not belong to

26. Mr. K. Kelappan, K. Madhavanar and Dr. Ganesh Pai.

27. Other speakers were Messrs. U. Gopala Menon, Muhammad Abdur Rahman, K. Madhavanar and Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma.

28. See the *Mathrubhumi* dated 12 March 1931.

the Congress Party came forward in hundreds and picketed the shops, holding the tri-colour flag. Such picketing had, indeed, a wholesome effect so far as the evil of drinking was considerably reduced, especially among the poorer classes.

Mrs. Margaret Pavamani now nominated a new Kerala Provincial Congress Committee as an emergency measure. There was little time to conduct proper elections before the impending session of the All-India Congress proposed to be held at Karachi. The fifty-nine members, nominated by her, included new blood, besides the members of the old guard.

The first meeting, after the Pact, of the Kerala Provisional Congress Committee was held at Calicut on 15 March, 1931. A new Working Committee²⁹ was constituted. It was resolved to take immediate steps to organise a separate, independent branch of the All India Spinners' Association in Kerala. A committee was constituted to chalk out the future programme of work in regard to the picketing of liquor and foreign-cloth shops, the propagation of khadi and similar constructive work. It was also decided to hold a Provincial Political Conference at Badagara.

29. The new Working Committee included Messrs. K. Kelappan (President) K. Madhavanar (Secretary), T. V. Sundara Iyer (Treasurer), P. K. Kunhisanthara Menon, Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, C. H. Govindan Nambiar, Muhammad Abdur Rahman and Smt. Kartyayani Amma.

CHAPTER 20

THE BADAGARA CONFERENCES

In accordance with the terms of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Government repealed on 6 March 1931 some of the repressive ordinances, like the Unlawful Association Ordinance of 1930, the Indian Press and Unauthorised News-sheets and News-papers Ordinance, etc. The ban laid on the working of the Congress Committees was lifted in Malabar and other places. The Satyagrahi prisoners, kept in the various jails of the Madras Presidency, began to be released, batch after batch, and they were warmly welcomed back as heroes. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact came as a great relief to the people and the Congress on its part discontinued from 6 March all activities connected with the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The release of the political prisoners gave immediately an impetus to the boycott movement and the peaceful picketing of liquor shops in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. As these activities were no longer unlawful, anybody could picket peacefully without fear of arrest. The picketing of shops was organised on a wide scale in Kerala, even the remote villages receiving attention.

Educated ladies from well-to-do families in Malabar now came to the forefront and picketed the foreign-cloth shops. In Palghat such work was organised by Mrs. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, Mrs. R. V. Sarma, Miss Matilda Kallen, Smt. C. R. Devaki Amma and Smt. M. K. Janaki Amma who with the aid of an enthusiastic band of volunteers and some of the members of the local Bar, picketed the leading wholesale and retail shops in the town and spread the message of Gandhiji in the remote villages of the Taluk as well. Calicut, the biggest commercial centre in Malabar, gave a lead to the rest of the country. Mrs. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya took up the leadership there with the hearty co-operation of a band of enthusiastic women workers.¹ They picketed the shops of the leading merchants while the men organisers² did everything possible to avoid traffic obstruction and maintain

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1. Mrs. U. Gopala Menon, Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma, Mrs. D. B. Sita Bai, Smt. T. Ammukutty Amma, (wife of a member of the Zamorin family) Mrs. K. Madhavan Nair, Smt. C. Kunhikavu Amma, Smt. T. Parukutty Amma, Smt. K. P. Lakshmiikutty Amma, and a few girls.
 2. Messrs. Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, P. Kumaran, K. Vasudevan Nair, P. K. Balakrishnan, K. V. Raman Menon, P. I. Kaimal and others.

orderliness in the streets. As some of the merchants showed adamantine obstinacy the picketing continued for several days, with no untoward incident at any time. At Tellicherry, Mrs. Margaret Pavamani and Smt. P. M. Kamalavathi³ organised the picketing while at Cannanore the ladies' came out of their homes for picketing from 19 March onwards. At all these towns the nationalist activity, as reported by the police, was regular and peaceful. On the whole, the ladies who entered the political field hailed from respectable middle-class families and were educated. Their participation in the movement enhanced its popularity and was bound to contribute to its ultimate success. They roused, it has to be recorded, the youth to an increasing consciousness of their duty to the motherland.

The picketing of the liquor shops in the District did not lag behind. Volunteer corps came to be organised in towns and villages by enthusiastic workers who resorted to the picketing on a mass scale. At Badagara the members of Princely and aristocratic families, led by Mr. E. K. Sankara Varma Raja and A. K. Krishna Varma Raja, joined the other volunteers in picketing the liquor shops. The members of the *Yuvak Sangh* carried on their activities for weeks at several places in Kurumbranad Taluk, like Tikkoti, Pallikkara, Meladi, Purakkad and Vannukham. At Taliparamba the leading landlords⁴ stood before the liquor shops in scorching sun appealing to the prospective customers to desist from drinking. The picketing, on the whole, was without incident in all places of importance in Kurumbranad Taluk; it was getting more "active and objectionable" in Kottayam Taluk while in Chirakkal Taluk it was in full swing, no less than sixty-one shops being picketed.⁵

These activities enthused the illiterate masses. Congress committees were organised in villages and towns to assist the activities of the young men and women.

A few die-hards among the bureaucrats had not reconciled themselves to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact upon which they looked with positive disfavour. In many parts of India there were serious and

3. They were helped by Smts. Sambhavi Amma, Sumathi Bai and Chandramati.

4. They included Mrs. M. Narayanan, Mrs. Madhava Pai who had a child in her arms, Mrs. Bhandarkar, Smts. M. K. Kausalya, M. K. Yasoda, M. K. Vani, M. Rudrani, S. Chandrika Bai, N. Madhavi and N. Revati, besides a few girls.

5. The volunteers were headed by Messrs. K. P. Gopalan Nambiar, M. P. Govindan Nambiar and M. Kunhappa Nair.

6. Special Branch Report of the District Superintendent of Police, Malabar, for the week ending on 11 April, 1931.

deliberate violations of its provisions and the Congress strongly protested against such incidents. The wound was too deep to be healed miraculously and the Pact could not be expected to work smoothly as long as the machinery of administration remained wooden, unimaginative and callous. Gandhiji made fervent pleas to the Government to release all the detainees who were being cruelly treated. He also pleaded for the commutation of the sentence of death passed on Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades who had been involved in the Lahore Conspiracy Case so that the political tension might be ceased and harmony established between the Government and the people. The public opinion in India also demanded it. The Government's answer came on the night of 23 March, 1931 when Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged in the Central Jail, Lahore. The intense national indignation generated by this incident expressed itself in hartals and demonstrations throughout the country. In Malabar Mr. T. P. Kumaran Nair, Jamedar in the Malabar Special Police Force stationed at Madras, resigned his office in protest against the cruel action of the Government and joined the *Yuva Sangh*. His act was symbolic of a new wave of determination that swept over the whole land.

It was in this tense atmosphere that the Indian National Congress assembled at its forty-fifth session at Karachi on the last three days in March, 1931 under the presidentship of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The Congress considered the provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India and made it clear that the goal of *purna swaraj* "still remained in fact." Gandhiji was authorised to attend the second Round Table Conference with such other delegates as the Working Committee might appoint to act "under his leadership." The Congress organisations were called upon never to relax their efforts in the matter of peaceful picketing, strictly in accordance with the terms of the Delhi settlement. The important resolution on fundamental rights and economic programme, which got its inspiration from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and its blessing from Gandhiji and Sardar Patel was expressive of the new idea that only economic freedom would put an end to the exploitation of the masses and that any *swaraj* constitution proposed for India should provide for the fundamental rights of the people.

The All-India Muslim Conference, meeting at Delhi on 5 April 1931, expressed itself in favour of separate electorates and adopted

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7. The Congress session at Karachi, 1931, while dissociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form placed on record its admiration for the bravery and sacrifice of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, Sukhdev and Rajguru and mourned the loss of their lives with the bereaved families.

an uncompromising attitude towards the Indian National Congress in spite of Gandhiji's efforts to reach an agreement. On the other hand the All-India Muslim Nationalists' Conference that met at Lucknow on 18 and 19 April under the presidency of Sir Ali Imam supported the idea of joint electorates.

On the return to Malabar of the delegates who had attended the Karachi Congress session, nationalist work in Kerala underwent a new orientation. The masses were roused all the more; and vigorous work was essential to keep up the momentum.

The first day of April 1931 witnessed the renewal of the licences of the liquor shops in Malabar. Many of them were opened on that day against the repeated requests of the Congress volunteers. So brisk picketing was resorted to in all the Taluks. The shop vendors were much worried about its success and the consequent loss that they were likely to incur. It would appear that these impatient vendors and other reactionary elements in society who had looked upon the Civil Disobedience Movement with disfavour were in league with the police with whose connivance a number of indignities came to be inflicted on the Congress volunteers.⁸ Yet several liquor shops had to be closed down for want of patronage. The *Madras Mail* warned that the picketing as at Calicut would lead to serious disturbance of peace; but Mr. K. Madhavanar, Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, issued a proper rejoinder on 24 April 1931 levelling his own charges against the officials.⁹ Anyway as a result

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8. Some of the liquor vendors and addicts treated the volunteers very badly. They abused the latter, assaulted them, threw lime water into their eyes and spat on them; others, it must be added, treated the volunteers with consideration. One contractor at Chalapuram ordered fermented toddy and kitchen refuse to be thrown on them. Similar incidents occurred in several parts of Malabar. Some volunteers were bodily lifted, beaten black and blue and often kept in confinement in a corner of the shop. Some of the police officers instigated the drunkards deliberately to create mischief to prove that peaceful picketing, sanctioned by the Delhi Pact, was an impossible idea.
 9. See *Mathrubhumi*, 25 April 1931. It was true, he stated, that the Congress was trying to carry out its programme upto the limits permitted by the Delhi Pact. A strong public opinion had been generated in the country through constant propaganda against foreign cloth and drinking. The youth organisations had made even remote villages reverberate with the message of the Congress. In fact the Congressmen were wondering how long the die-hard officialdom in India would tolerate Gandhian activities that threatened to affect its old ways and false sense of prestige. There were strong reasons to suspect, Mr. Madhavanar added, that the hidden hands behind the disturbances at public meetings in Ernad and Valluvanad

of effective propaganda several Harijan women stopped frequenting the liquor shops. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee appointed separate committees in each Taluk for picketing and for carrying on the anti-untouchability campaign.

The great awakening in Malabar had its immediate favourable repercussion on the States of Cochin and Travancore where the people came forward to enforce Prohibition and propagate the use of khadi. The educated women of Cochin,¹⁰ belonging to middle-class families, launched the picketing campaign in Trichur town on 25 April 1931 with the co-operation of Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma and Mrs. Margaret Pavamani from Calicut. Under the direction of Messrs. Kurur Nilkantan Nambudiripad, E. Ikkanda Warriar and K. Madhava Menon, they lined up in front of the leading foreign-cloth shops. The sight of the high-spirited ladies, fully drenched in the rain, standing before the shops and appealing to the buyers' conscience was indeed touching. As the picketing continued on the subsequent days, some young men¹¹ belonging to the orthodox aristocratic Nambudiri families also stepped forward. It was most embarrassing to the shop owners when Mr. Nanu Ezhuthachan, a gentleman aged eighty-three from Nemmara and Mr. A. K. Bhagavan,¹²

Taluks and at the picketing spots in Calicut town were the same as those responsible for sensational reports in newspapers. But for the connivance of the *abkari* and police officials and Magistrates, the liquor shops which should have been closed at 8 P.M. according to law could not have been kept open till 2 A.M. It appeared as if the officers were breaking the law because the nationalists had suspended law-breaking! Those with vested interests gave out that picketing would lead to violence so that the Government might let loose a repressive policy on the people. Mr. Madhavanar assured that the volunteers wanted the people to hold on to the cult of non-violence and asserted that the officers, in league with the vested interests, should bear the entire responsibility if any disturbance were to break out at any time.

10. They included Smts. P. Amritamma, P. Visalakshi Amma, T. Lakshmi Kutty, M. Kartyayani Amma, M. Lakshmi Kutty Amma, Puduval Ambadi A. Narayani-kutty, Puduval Ambadi Kochammini, K. Kamalam, T. Subhadra, Mrs. T. C. Achutha Menon, Mrs. Ikkanda Warriar, and others. A few more joined them on the subsequent days.
11. Messrs. O. M. C. Unni Nambudiripad, E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad and P. Trivikraman Bhattatiri were among them.
12. A true Gandhian, he stood at his post for several days in pouring rain. When he learnt one day that somebody had thrown refuse and dirt on the verandah of a foreign-cloth shop, he cleaned the whole place and exhorted the by-standers never to be carried away by ill-will towards anyone.

an old Brahmin, clad in loin cloth and holding the tri-colour flag in his hands, appealed to them not to deal in foreign cloth any more. The picketing of the liquor shops was most vigorous in Cranganore and Mattancherry and the vendors sustained heavy loss thereby.

As regards Travancore, Mr. K. Kumar organised an effective picketing of foreign-cloth shops at Alleppey; he was aided by several Muslim young men and many members of the Saraswath Brahmin community. Ladies and young boys and girls also were very active at Alleppey; Mrs. T. K. Madhavan, Dr. Rugmini Amma, Mrs. K. Lakshmi Gopalakrishnan and others, led by Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma from Trichur, did not spare themselves, during the campaign. Picketing was organised at Ambalapuzha and Trivandrum¹³ also. Public meetings were held in the different parts of the State almost every day and the masses enlightened.

It was at this juncture that in May, 1931 Badagara, the headquarters town of Kurumbranad Taluk in Malabar, attracted thousands of people from all parts of Kerala. The fifth Kerala Provincial Political Conference was held there from 4 to 5 May at *Narayana Nagar*,¹⁴ where an extensive *pandal* had been put up for the purpose. The Provincial Women's Conference, the All-Kerala Students' Conference, the Hindi Prachar Conference and the Kerala Political Sufferers' Conference also were held on the same occasion. Great leaders from other parts of India participated in the conference.¹⁵

13. The picketing of foreign-cloth shops at Trivandrum was inaugurated formally only on 24 November, 1931. The leading citizens of the town like Messrs. K. G. Kunhikrishna Pillai, C. Narayana Pillai, C. I. Parameswaran Pillai, P. N. Krishna Pillai, T. S. Kochukrishna Pillai, G. Sridhar, Kottur Kunhikrishna Pillai, T. K. Narayana Pillai and V. K. Gopalakrishna Pillai participated in the picketing on that day. They were guided by Messrs. K. A. Damodara Menon, P. Krishna Pillai and Syed Mohammad from Calicut.
14. It was named so after Mr. M. P. Narayana Menon who was serving a life imprisonment for the alleged offence of waging war against the king.
15. On morning of 3 May when Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma unfurled the tri-colour flag, the venue of the Conference was crowded with delegates and visitors. It was a spectacular scene when the distinguished leaders like Messrs. J. M. Sen Gupta, K. F. Nairman and T. Prakasam and Smt. Padmavathi Asher arrived by train at the Badagara railway station. The booming of thirty-one guns announced their arrival. The leaders were taken to the conference in a procession headed by richly caparisoned elephants. The whole town was decorated gaily. Red shirt Volunteers worked feverishly under their leaders, Messrs. E. C. K. Nambiar of the *Yuvak Sangh* and T. P. Kumaran Nair. Messrs. V. Ryrur Kurup, A. K. Krishna Varma Raja and **Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar** organised the whole function. Mr. P. K. Narayanan Nair of Nadapuram was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Mr. E. K. Sankara Varma Raja and Mr. Ryrur Kurup were the Secretaries.

Their visit to Malabar was opportune, for at a time of intense struggle for national liberation it enabled the masses on the West coast to feel the oneness of India and imbibe a sense of emotional integration. The Gandhian ideology was to permeate the rural areas through the great leaders who had suffered and sacrificed for the motherland.

The Provincial Women's Conference was the first to be held, under the presidentship of Smt. Padmavathi Asher of Tirupur. The women of Malabar, as a class, had been confined so far to their homes and even educated ladies of aristocratic or middle class families never used to participate in public activities; those who had received the benefits of higher or University education as in Cochin or Travancore never thought of entering upon a political career except in a few cases. But since 1930 when the Salt Satyagraha started, several ladies, especially of Hindu middle class families, threw themselves heart and soul into the great movement; even Nambudiri ladies of orthodox aristocratic families tore off the *purdah* that separated them from the social life around and entered the political field. Malabar can be legitimately proud of the few Christian ladies from rich families who came out to serve the country in those early days when the Christian community in general had been hesitating to identify itself with the national movement. The women had originally started their work with *khadi* and *swadeshi* propaganda but soon many of them, under a sudden inspiration, plunged headlong into the fray, courting arrest and imprisonment.¹⁶ On this background it was in the fitness of things to give priority to the Women's Conference at Badagara though the Political Conference was the main centre of attraction.

Smt. Padmavathi Asher¹⁷ in her presidential address called on the women to keep the tri-colour flag flying aloft until the attainment of independence. The conference resolved that all Hindus, irrespective of caste differences, should have free access to all public places and demanded the recognition of the equal rights of women, consistent with their number, in all administrative institutions. It

16. *The Rashtriya Stree Sabha* was formed in Cannanore on 28 April 1931 with Mrs. Madhava Pai as President and Smt. O. K. Madhavi Amma and Mrs. M. Narayanan as Secretaries. The committee included thirty-five ladies. The object of the body was to organise classes in spinning, popularise Hindi, and conduct propaganda for prohibition and *swadeshi*; those who could, were also asked to picket foreign-cloth shops.

17. On her arrival she was given a guard of honour by the smartly-uniformed volunteers of the *Balika Bharat Sangh*. Smt. Dakshayani Kettilamma was the Chairman of the Reception Committee.

was decided to organise the *Kerala Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh*,¹⁸ for carrying on nationalist work and serving the cause of women in the country and to set up night schools and handicraft training centres for providing education and employment for poor women.

The All-Kerala Students' Conference,¹⁹ the first of its kind in Kerala, was presided over by Mr. K. F. Nariman of Bombay. It symbolized the great upsurge and yearning for freedom, that at the time characterised the rising generation in Kerala. As early as 1921 the students of Malabar especially at Calicut had left their educational institutions at the great leader's call to take part in the struggle for freedom though their number was small then; the developments in Malabar in 1921 had their echo in the students' struggle at Trivandrum in that year. The huge wave of 1930 and 1931 engulfed the students as a whole, including even young boys and girls of primary schools, who did yeoman service in the propagation of khadi and *swadeshi* and in the picketing of liquor and foreign-cloth shops. In his presidential address, Mr. Nariman exhorted the youth to fight against and remove all obstacles to progress, political, social or cultural. The Conference adopted several resolutions.

Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta of Bengal presided over the Provincial Political Conference. He gave a clear exposition of the Congress programme and policy by which the people of Kerala should stand through thick and thin and pleaded for the removal of all social disabilities and caste restrictions. The Conference passed a number of resolutions.²⁰

18. Such a *Sangh* was formed in Calicut on 13 June 1931 at a meeting of women at Verkol House, with Mrs. Margaret Pavamani as President, Smt. Kunhikavu Amma as Vice-President, Smt. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma as Treasurer and Smt. P. M. Kamalavathi and Smt. K. Kunbilakshmi Amma as Secretaries.

19. Mr. Muhammad Abdur Rahman, the powerful leader and Editor of the *Al-Ameen* of Calicut, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The Conference was ably organised by Mr. Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair, its General Secretary and Messrs. K. P. Padmanabha Menon and Kanoth Padmanabhan, who had taken a leading part in organising the students' movement in Malabar. Others actively connected with it were Mr. M. Govinda Menon, Mr. K. C. V. Raja, Miss Mary Thomas and Smt. K. E. Sharada.

20. The Conference requested the Government of Madras to release Mr. M. P. Narayana Menon from jail, as also the Moplah prisoners convicted during the rebellion of 1921: out of 7000 persons so convicted, nearly 1000 were still languishing in jail. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was directed to take steps for the propagation of Hindi on a wider scale in Kerala. It was resolved to organise *kisans* and labourers in factories for which purpose a committee was appointed, consisting of Mrs. Margaret Pavamani, Mr. U. Gopala Menon, Mr. K. A. Damodara Menon and Mr. Muhammad

The Hindi Prachar Conference was presided over by Mr. K. F. Nariman.

Mr. T. Prakasam of Madras was the President of the Kerala Political Sufferers' Conference which also passed a few resolutions.²¹

Abdur Rahman. The Conference congratulated all the men, women and children of Kerala who had sacrificed and suffered much in the course of the freedom struggle and affirmed that Kerala would stand by the Congress and Gandhiji in future as well until the winning of independence; the resolutions to this effect were moved by Mr. K. Madhavan Nair and Mr. L. S. Prabhu. A demand was put forth, on the initiative of Mr. U. Gopala Menon, that Kerala should be constituted into a separate Province. It was decided to contest elections to the Local Boards on party basis (as proposed by Mr. P. K. Kunhisankara Menon). The Government was called upon to regulate the time for the sale of liquor in shops (as suggested by Mr. P. Achuthan). The resolution moved by Mr. P. K. Narayanan Nair was passed, appealing to all public workers and newspapers in the land not to give publicity to news or reports, likely to engender communal ill-feeling. There was to be a separate branch of A. I. S. A. for Kerala (Mr. P. I. Kaimal's resolution). On Mr. Kelappan's initiative it was resolved that propaganda in favour of temple entry should be organised on a wide scale in Kerala. [The *Hindu* hoped (on 6 May 1931) that in this matter "the need for acting with all circumspection so as not to stir up antagonisms that might be avoided and fritter away energies which required to be concentrated on the fight for *swaraj* will be fully borne in mind."] While accepting the principle of federation, the Conference urged, according to Mr. C. Krishnan Nair's suggestion, that it should be accompanied by responsibility at the centre and in the Princely States. The Conference gave support to Mr. T. Subramanian Tirumumb's resolution that the resolution on fundamental rights and economic programme passed at the Karachi session of the Congress should be implemented in the Princely States also simultaneously. The bureaucratic system of Government should be replaced by a village *panchayat* system and no employee of the Government should get, as monthly salary, an amount below Rs 30.

21. A memorial, according to one resolution, should be established to commemorate the inhuman official action that caused the wagon tragedy in which nearly 70 out of 100 Moplah prisoners who had been put in one railway wagon died of suffocation. A committee was appointed, with Mr. Kelappan as Chairman and Mr. Muhammad Abdur Rahman as Convener, to take proper steps in the matter. By another resolution a committee including Mr. T. Subramanian Tirumumb, Mr. T. V. Chathukutty Nair and Mr. Kelappan was formed to write a history of the Satyagraha Movement in Kerala which would bring to light those heroes who had fought, suffered and died and yet remained unknown, unhonoured and unsung. A memorial for the Satyagraha struggle was to be erected and a fund raised to help the families of those warriors who died in harness in jail. By another resolution the division of political prisoners into classes was declared to be totally unacceptable.

A Conference of Tiyya youths met at Badagara at the time of the Political Conference. Resolutions were passed pledging thier whole-hearted support to Gandhiji and the Congress and favouring khadi propaganda, Prohibition and temple entry.²²

Badagara, the home of heroes and warriors, added a feather to its cap through the Conference which revealed the strong resolve of the people not to accept any settlement short of the substance of self-government. The decisions at the various Conferences were well-received by the press.

After the Conferences the leaders toured several parts of Malabar and Cochin carrying with them the message of the Indian National Congress. In Calicut town itself, gaily decorated with festoons and tri-colour flags, they had to wend their way with difficulty through surging but affectionate crowds. Mr. Nariman was much impressed by the spontaneity of the nationalist movement in the towns and the interior villages in Kerala, the people having faith in the Congress and following its injunctions. He found young volunteers in remote villages picketing the shops at late hours in the night, holding tri-colour flags in their hands, and was much happy about the beauty of the land and the hospitality of the people. Mr. Sen Gupta²³ found the villages and houses in Malabar spotlessly clean and regretted that the region had not got the publicity that it richly deserved. People outside, he added, had little idea of

22. The die-hard section of the Tiyya community however had met at Jagannath Temple, Tellicherry, on 2 May, and called upon the Tiyya youths never to be carried away by the nationalist slogans or to allow themselves to be exploited by others in an independent India. Mr. Kottieth Krishnan told them that the British Government alone could save them and that the tax levied by the considerate Government fell on the non-Tiyya landlord class. This piece of unsolicited advice of course fell on deaf ears. It may be noted that in Malabar a large section of the Tiyya community, especially its younger generation, had exhibited their patriotism by joining the nationalist movement. Mr. P. Achuthan of the Calicut Bar had been in the fray ever since the Home Rule Movement. His was the Herculean job of organising the members of his community under the tri-colour flag against the powerful and rich leaders with vested interests who stood steadfast in their loyalty to the British. All liquor trade was in the hands of the Tiyya community and some of its reactionary leaders could not reconcile themselves with the Prohibition policy adopted by the Congress and they were afraid that the fire of nationalism would consume them. Fortunately most of the Ezhava leaders of Travancore were lending their moral support to their compatriots in Malabar.

23. The *Mathrubhumi*, 11 May 1931.

Kerala's role in the national struggle whereas the truth was that on account of the efficient picketing even the secret sale of liquor or foreign-cloth was a rare phenomenon in the area; he was sure that Kerala would lead the other parts of India should the necessity arise for another Civil Disobedience Movement.

Kerala had the good fortune to accord a hearty welcome to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also. After having stayed in Newara Eliya in Ceylon for some time for reasons of health, he came down to Kerala with his wife and daughter in May-June, 1931. After a visit to Capecomorin, Nagercoil and Trivandrum²⁴ he reached Calicut on 30 May, only to be overwhelmed by popular affection and love. His addresses at several public meetings including a women's gathering in Verkot House in Calicut proved to be further source of profound inspiration to the people of Kerala.

24. Ibid 27 May, 1931. While at Trivandrum, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and party proceeded to their temporary residence, only to be stopped on the way at the fortgate by an armed contingent of the Travancore Forces. Though temperamentally he would have resisted all obstacles, he did not want to embarrass the Government in a Princely State and instructed the diversion of his car to another route.

From Kerala he proceeded to Mysore where he was the honoured guest of the Maharaja.

CHAPTER 21

THICKENING CLOUDS

The picketing of the foreign-cloth shops and liquor shops continued in full swing in Malabar and British Cochin. It affected the sales, which very much disturbed the Government. Probably under secret instructions from the superior authorities the police now thought of various means to defeat and crush the Congress. False cases of assault were foisted on the Congress volunteers by the liquor-shop vendors, leading to convictions in spite of insufficient evidence.¹ Rowdies were employed to disturb the political meetings.² Congressmen were harassed by the police in every possible manner.³

1. Twelve volunteers were arrested at Kollam, near Quilandy, at night on 16 June 1931 on a false complaint by the liquor shop vendor. The prevention of peaceful picketing was a violation of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.
2. On the occasion of the celebration of a temple festival a few hirelings of the police tried to create disturbance at a public meeting held at Angadippuram under the presidentship of Mr. M. P. Govinda Menon on 5 April. It was alleged that the police authorities at Nattukal brought the rowdies from Tazhekad and lodged them in the police station at Perintalmanna for disturbing the largely-attended public meeting. (*Mathrubhumi* dated 9 April, 1931). On 11 April, the *Mathrubhumi* gave the details of a similar occurrence at a public meeting in Ramanattukara addressed by Mr. K. Kelappan. The intention seems to have been to establish that even peaceful picketing and propaganda in Ernad and Valluvanad taluks would lead to trouble. It was surprising that some tin gods and rowdy buffoons should have been employed to champion the cause of the great British empire in the presence of the official custodians of peace.
3. The Congress had been compelled to vacate the building that it was using as office at Pattambi. The tri-colour flag fluttering in front of it was removed and burnt by rowdies at the instance of the police in open day light. The news about this incident aroused strong feelings everywhere and Mr. S. G. Venkatachala Iyer of Calicut put one of his buildings in Pattambi at the disposal of the Congress. On 19 July 1931 its occupation was inaugurated formally with a public meeting and procession. On 21 July the former unfortunate incident repeated itself when several Moplah hooligans trespassed into the premises out-numbering and severely beating the occupants. It was found that they were not local inhabitants but hirelings brought by the police from remote villages. Next day several shop-keepers in Pattambi hoisted tri-colour flags in their premises in spite of warnings by the police whereupon the rowdies paraded the streets and terrorised the

Thanks to the efforts of the police a meeting of the loyalists was held at Ramanattukara,⁴ Feroke, on 13 June under the presidentship of Kundotti Thargal and a procession conducted in which the village officers and the police authorities of Kundotti, Malappuram, Manjeri and Arikode participated. The idea was being spread that the Congress was sowing the seeds of another rebellion in Ernad Taluk.

Meanwhile the women leaders of Calicut had decided to organise an All-Kerala Women's League with headquarters at Calicut for national reconstruction work. The Municipal Council, Calicut, discussed the question of placing Gandhiji's portrait on the walls in the Council Office, Municipal Library and Municipal Schools and having Mr. Vallathol Narayana Menon's famous flag song *pora pora* sung in all Municipal Schools and also having the tri-colour flag hoisted on all Municipal buildings.⁵ The Malabar District Board, on its part, passed towards the end of June 1931 a resolution in favour of total Prohibition in Malabar and also refused to rent its trees for tapping. The Valluvanad Taluk Board decided in August 1931 to donate an amount for Prohibition propaganda in the Taluk, to place Gandhiji's portrait on the wall in every school under its management and to request its staff to use *swadeshi* goods and cloth as far as possible. Thus the Local Self-Governing Bodies expressed their active sympathy with the Gandhian ideals and in the elections to

shop-keepers by brandishing their daggers. The shops and schools were closed, to avoid a riot. The indifference shown by the police at the time of such incidents was calculated. It was for the European Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Palghat, camping at Ottapalam, to rush to the spot and request the infuriated citizens to stop observing the hartal and pursue activities. Private enquiries proved that the police had been inciting the mischievous elements. (See *Mathrubhumi* dated 22 July, 1931).

Similarly at the time of the auctioning of the liquor licences, in August, Mr. K. A. Damodara Menon, Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, Mr. Madhavanar and other workers including Moplah volunteers went in procession from Parappanangadi to Parakkatavu to do propaganda work. The party was attacked by rowdies with the connivance of the police who obstructed its activities at Tirurangadi. Similar incidents occurred at several places in Ernad Taluk as well as at Palghat. The hooliganism let loose by the police and the die-hard Moplahs who allowed themselves to be hirelings was certainly an acid test of the moral stamina of the Congress Workers. (See the *Mathrubhumi* dated 20 July, 1931).

4. Report in the *Mathrubhumi* dated 14 June, 1931.
5. Mr. K. Madhava Menon moved the resolution on Gandhiji's portrait. Fourteen members voted for it and only two against it. Mr. Menon also moved the resolution on the flag song and tri-colour flag. Mr. C. V. Narayana Menon, the Chairman, ruled that the resolutions were inadmissible and disallowed them.

them during the year the Congress candidates were returned mostly with a majority.

Meanwhile a few reactionaries in Malabar complained⁶ to Gandhiji against the activities of the Congressmen in Malabar, adding that their picketing often savoured of violence and that they were harassing the customers as well as the liquor-shop renters causing untold hardship and loss to them. The news very much distressed Gandhiji who felt that if peaceful picketing was not possible it might be better to stop it altogether. He requested Mr. C. Rajagopalachari to proceed to Malabar and investigate the allegations against the Congressmen.⁷ Mr. Madhavanar, Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, refuted them as concocted by interested parties adversely affected by the picketing. The campaign against liquor had evidently given a moral elevation to the people which the diehards found it difficult to swallow. When it was found that the Manager of Primary School at Ramanattukara entered a liquor shop picketed by the students of his own institution, a few of the conscience-stricken Teachers resigned their offices in June 1931. Mr. K. Kelappan, President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, was summoned to Bombay where the Congress Working Committee met on 9 July, 1931. He gave a detailed account of the developments in Malabar after the Delhi Pact and also presented a memorandum to the All-India Congress Working Committee.⁸

Mr. Kelappan stated that as a result of the picketing of nearly 300 liquor shops in Malabar, the sales had either dwindled or ceased altogether. Peaceful picketing was tolerated at first but as it soon spread and proved effective, inhuman treatment came to be extended to the volunteers by the chronic drunkards and shop-owners, in

6. See the *Mathrubhumi* dated 30 June, 1931.

7. Gandhiji had been informed that nobody dared to buy trees on rental basis for tapping, that the Congress office at Tellicherry was actually issuing summons to the owners to close their liquor shops without compensation and that the latter were fully conscious of the consequences that would follow in case of defiance on their part. On 5 June he wrote to the Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee: ".....at the present moment I cannot give you better advice than to ask you to discuss the whole thing with Sjt. Rajagopalachari and act in consultation with him. I am sure that if orders under 144 are passed for the time being at any rate you should obey them." (From Special Branch, C. I. D. dated 12 June, 1931). On 19 June the Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee informed Mr. Jairamdas Daulatram, Ahmedabad, that in view of the impending auction sales of liquor shops in Malabar, the police and excise officials, evidently with the help of the magistracy, were trying their level best to foil the picketing activities. (No. 1575, From the Special Branch, dated 24 June, 1931).

8. See *Mathrubhumi*, dated 9 July, 1931.

league with the police, at places like Cherukunnu, Trikkaripur, Nileswaram, Quilandy etc. As for the volunteers, they stuck to non-violence under the gravest provocation, often undergoing the rough handling until they would fall down unconscious; only in a few instances did they make any complaint to the local Magistrates.

Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta, member of the Congress Working Committee, conveyed to that body his own happy impressions of the great constructive work turned out in an orderly manner in Malabar. The Working Committee, after carefully considering all developments, came to the conclusion that the District officers in many parts of India, particularly in the United Provinces and Malabar, had ignored and violated the provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and that the police and excise officials in Malabar were responsible for a number of inexcusable excesses.

At a meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee held at Calicut in July, 1931, it was decided to observe the Prohibition Week from 26 July in order to effect the boycott of the impending auction of liquor shops in Malabar. The observance, characterised by meetings and processions, was a great success. Meanwhile the Commissioner of Excise, Madras, issued an order declaring the picketing of auction an offence. Gandhiji considered the order "high-handed" and there were several protests made to the Government of Madras from many places. On Mr. C. Rajagopalachari's representation regarding the offensive nature of the order, the Governor of Madras notified that peaceful picketing of any kind was lawful according to clause 7 of the Delhi Pact. This gubernatorial clarification which modified an over-enthusiastic official's order gave a further fillip to the Prohibition work in Malabar. The auctions of August, 1931 were vigorously picketed everywhere in the vicinity of the liquor shops and even outside the premises of the Taluk offices where they were conducted. The results proved the fair amount of success of the Prohibition movement."

9. In Palghat Taluk, out of the 125 liquor shops only eight could be auctioned at very low rates. In Ernad Taluk, violence was used against the volunteers and 84 out of 98 shops could be auctioned. But the total value realised was only Rs.17310 whereas it was Rs.30396 during the previous year. Individuals were ready to bid only after a lot of inducement and assurances given by the Police and Excise Departments. In Valluvanad Taluk, 91 out of 121 shops were auctioned and the realised value was lower than that of the previous year by Rs. 16142. In Calicut Taluk, where the police, revenue and excise officials exerted utmost pressure upon and promised complete protection to the bidders, most of the shops could be auctioned. In Kurumbranad Taluk only 59 out of 104 shops were auctioned. In Chirakal Taluk all but 24 out of 157 shops were auctioned but the value was less by Rs. 37116 than during the previous year.

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan of the Punjab visited Malabar and Cochin in August, 1931. He emphasised the need for protecting the honour of the tri-colour flag. The National Flag Day was celebrated in Malabar as in the other parts of India on 30 August 1931.

The first National Muslim Conference was convened at Telli-cherry, on 22 and 23 August under the presidentship of Mr. Jamal Muhammad Saheb of Madras. It was resolved to request the Government to release all Moplah prisoners, repeal the Moplah Outrages Act and disband the Malabar Special Police Force. Mr. Muhammad Abdur Rahman moved the political resolution.¹⁰ Mr. K. M. Seethi Saheb condemned the action of those who obstructed the Congress in its struggle for independence.

Meanwhile the Government was preparing to meet a possible recrudescence of the Civil Disobedience Movement. They did not consider that the Delhi Pact was permanent or that the Congress would stick to constitutional methods in future. The Congress thought the Government was only taking advantage of the Pact to perfect its organisation and win over the masses to its side by dangling before them the bait of a no-rent campaign. They decided to counter the policy of the Congress by proving to those with any stake in the country that, considering the declared policy of the Congress, their support to the latter or even their attitude of neutrality would be fatal to their own interests.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact seemed to be breaking down, the Congress and the Government levelling charges against each other. In the last week of August, 1931, Gandhiji interviewed Mr. Emerson, Home Secretary to the Government of India, and Lord Willingdon.

10. It was stated that India's political goal was *swaraj*, protecting the legitimate interests of the minority communities. Mr. Jamal Muhammad Saheb opined that the reference to such protection in the resolution was not consistent with the idea of *swaraj*, a term which at any time would imply that the Indians have confidence in themselves. The mover of the resolution clarified that the reference to the protection of Muslim interests was to satisfy those who were afraid that India's independence would place them in jeopardy. There was no such reference when the resolution was being placed before and studied by the Subjects Committee on the previous day. It was inexplicable how it ultimately found a place in the resolution. Anyway Mr. Abdur Rahman agreed with the President that it was meaningless. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan also participated in the discussions.

There were resolutions favourably referring to joint electorates, *swadeshi*, Prohibition, urdu (which should be the national language) and a Federal constitution for India, with residual powers vested in the units.

who had succeeded Lord Irwin on 18 April, 1931, as Viceroy. Following the talks, a communique was published on 28 August 1931 and on the next day Gandhiji undertook his voyage to London to attend the second Round Table Conference.

Even while the above-mentioned talks were going on the Government was making all preparations to meet the impending crisis of a revival of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Under instructions from the Government of India the Provincial Governments got their plan ready, the chief items of which were the renewal of the previous year's ordinances, the promulgation of the Emergency Powers Ordinance, the arrest of the leaders, the declaration of the Congress bodies as unlawful associations and proper action against the Congress volunteer training camps. The thick black blanket of oppression was going to be put over Malabar for a number of months to come.

Altogether the period following the Delhi Pact was characterised by the deliberate attempt of the hardened bureaucracy and the police to destroy the fund of goodwill generated by it. But it served only to make the people all the more determined in their quest of freedom.

CHAPTER 22

DARK DAYS

By the end of the year 1931 it became quite clear that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact had already become a deadletter. The claw of the Government showed itself out of the flesh. The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress felt that no useful purpose would be served by the further participation of Gandhiji in the Round Table Conference. Though Gandhiji was free to decide for himself upon the future course of action, the Working Committee thought that in view of the dangerous political developments, particularly in Bengal, the United Provinces and the Frontier Province, his immediate return to India was preferable to a prolonged tour of Europe.

Addressing the Students' Association in London on 10 November, 1931, Gandhiji stated that if he could not secure India's freedom through difficult negotiations at the Round Table Conference he would have to renew the Civil Disobedience Movement in India as talks from behind the prison bars were comparatively easier and more effective. At the last meeting of the Round Table Conference Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, the British Prime Minister announced that the intention of the British Government was to give autonomy immediately to the Provinces in India and consider other steps later. While thanking him for his great and strenuous work, Gandhiji in his final speech made it clear that they were at the parting of the ways. Gandhiji returned to India, a disappointed man. If the Delhi Pact proved to be a hollow truce, the Round Table Conference frustrated Indian nationalist aspirations.

The Government had already unleashed an unabashed policy of repression in India. They trimmed the engines of terrorism to perfection. The political atmosphere became tense with excitement. Mr. Kiran Das, brother of Mr. Jalindranath Das who had sacrificed his life in jail after several days of hunger-strike, was arrested at Calicut in September, 1931 and remanded to custody.¹ The arrest was very much

1. See the *Mathrubhumi* dated 20 September, 1931. Mr. Kiran Das and Mr. Keshav Lal, President of the Tamilnad *Nayajawan Sabha*, had addressed public meetings at Calicut, exhorting the youth to work for complete independence. They had boarded the Mail train on their way to Palghat when two bus-loads of police rushed to the platform to effect their arrest under section 117 I. P. C. Mr. Kiran Das was charged after a few days with sedition and incitement under 12A and 153 A, I. P. C. and 108 and 112 Cr. P. C. and a security amount of Rs.50,000 was demanded of him for good behaviour. Anyway he was later sentenced to one year's imprisonment on 16 November, 1931. (*Mathrubhumi* 16 November, 1931).

resented, particularly by the youth of Malabar. The police was committing several atrocities in Bengal where a Criminal Law Ordinance had been brought into force; firing was resorted to in the camp jail at Hijli and there were indiscriminate arrests at Dacca. In the North West Frontier Province, the Provincial Congress Committee had been declared to be unlawful. Economically agrarian discontent had already spread all over the United Provinces, where the ryot never knew peace ever since the Gandhi-Irwin Pact; such an intolerable situation in which there was neither peace nor struggle could not be expected to last long. However an ordinance was issued to prevent the proposed no-rent campaign in the United Provinces.

The Government then sought to remove the leaders, one after another, from the field of active work. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested along with Mr T. L. K. Sherwani on the morning of 26 December, while they were on their way to Bombay to accord a welcome to Gandhiji on his return and attend the meeting of Congress Working Committee; he had violated an ordinance that had prohibited him from leaving Allahabad. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Dr. Khan Saheb and others were arrested in North West Frontier Province. In the United Provinces, Babu Purushotambas Tandon was arrested and convicted. Gandhiji's arrival at Bombay on 28 December was marked not only by a hearty reception but also by a hartal observed in many places in protest against the leaders' arrests by the Government.

Gandhiji sought an interview with the Viceroy to explore the avenues of peace but received a negative answer. The Congress Working Committee met at Bombay on 29, 30 and 31 December, 1931 and 1 January 1932 and resolved to request the Government to create a calm atmosphere by discontinuing the policy of repression. The Working Committee considered the British Prime Minister's declaration at the Round Table Conference as "wholly unsatisfactory and inadequate in terms of the Congress demands", and emphasised that the Congress would be satisfied with nothing short of complete independence, including full control over defence, external affairs and finance. If the Government were to pay no heed to the voice of prudence, the Working Committee called upon the people of India to start the Civil Disobedience Movement including no-tax campaign afresh under absolutely peaceful conditions; no Province or District or Taluk was to participate in it where it would not be possible to maintain peace; non-violence must be observed in thought, word and deed even under the gravest provocation; the social boycott of the Government officials and the reactionary loyalists was never to be resorted to as it would involve an element of violence. The Working Committee appealed to all free nations to extend their moral support to India.

On 3 January, 1932, the Viceroy issued four ordinances, prohibiting all activities contrary to the general safety and peace and declaring certain organisations unlawful and even peaceful picketing an offence. Next day Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Congress, Subhas Chandra Bose and other leaders were arrested.² It may be noted that soon after the meeting of the Working Committee, Gandhiji had asked for an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, which the latter refused to grant. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact, signed during the Civil Disobedience Movement, had only suspended and not abandoned it; Gandhiji himself had made it clear to Lord Willingdon at Simla that he would reserve the right to resume it in case a satisfactory solution would not be found to India's political problem; he had also indicated at London that the failure of the Round Table Conference would only suggest the path of struggle ahead. The prolongation of the struggle and the intensity of suffering after the nation's entry into the ordeal of fire would make the people all the more fit for *swaraj*. Gandhiji called upon the American nation to watch the course of the struggle in India and exercise their vast influence for the salvation of humanity subjected to repression. India's struggle was bound to be of international importance; Gandhiji was certain that Satyagraha, if marked by non-violence, would see the dawn of a new era, as it was turned rather against an imperialistic system than Englishmen as individuals.

The Viceroy's ordinances and the leaders' arrests created indeed a critical situation in India and galvanised the masses into spirited action. The continuation of the repressive policy held out for them the prospect of unbearable suffering. The Government had obviously decided to annihilate the Indian National Congress without realising however that true Satyagraha cannot be overwhelmed by

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- 2 On seeing the warrant of arrest Gandhi issued at Mani Bhuvan, Bombay, a message to the nation through the Congress President calling upon the people never to swerve from truth and non-violence. He bade farewell to Kasturba and other near relatives and accompanied the police officers to Yerawada Jail, taking with him among other articles two books presented to him by Ramsay MacDonald and Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India. Sardar Patel was arrested at his residence in Bombay. On the eve of his arrest he also called upon the nation to be prepared for any sacrifice in the noble cause of the country, for the problem was whether India should live or fade out permanently. He also nominated Babu Rajendra Prasad as the next President of the Congress. Subhas Chandra Bose was arrested at Kalyan railway station under Regulation 3 of 1818, while on his way to Calcutta.

brute force. The words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru continued to ring in the ears of the people:

They country should get ready for the ensuing war of independence. This war should be carried on as long as one man, woman or child is alive in this country. We should challenge the Government to war in every house of ours. A single individual armed with the weapon of Satyagraha may oppose and war with a big empire. We shall conduct the campaign of the boycott of foreign cloth, irrespective of compromise, peace or war. I call upon those that are ready to make a vigorous sacrifice for the country to jump into the fire of war as soon as it is lit up.³

The flame of general dissatisfaction was fanned by the final orders passed by the Government of Madras introducing the resettlement rate of land tax in Malabar. The land tax was enhanced practically by 18½ percent.⁴ At a time when the people were suffering from the worst effects of a great economic crisis and finding it impossible to make both ends meet the Government decided on this step on the convenient assumption that the prices had so gone up as to make the people prosperous and justify an enhancement of the rate. It was a mockery of public opinion that the Government should have tried to revise the rate in their executive capacity, in utter disregard of the wishes of the people and the resolutions of the Legislature. The press in general was highly critical of the unimaginative policy of the Government. The Bardoli Satyagraha was still green in popular memory and the question was whether the ryot in Malabar should follow the footsteps of his counterpart in Bardoli or not.

In the emergency created by the Viceroy's ordinances, Congress Committees dissolved themselves throughout the country, nominating Dictators to carry on the work. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, meeting on 4 January, 1932 resolved that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact had come to an end and declared itself and its Working Committee dissolved with immediate effect. A second period of Dictatorship dawned in Malabar. Mr. L. S. Prabhu, President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, was nominated as the first Dictator of the Congress in Kerala with power to nominate his successor in case of his own arrest. The office of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was shifted from the Mathrubhumi

3. The *Swatantrida Sangh*, Madras, 21 December, 1931.

4. The *Gomathi*, Trichur, dated 3 January, 1932.

Buildings.⁵ The Congress Volunteer Corps, the Kerala *Yuvak Sangh*, the Congress Taluk Committees and similar organisations had already been declared to be unlawful bodies. Prohibitory orders were enforced in all important places and on all leading nationalist workers.⁶ The Editors and Publishers of newspapers were warned against publishing anything that would be helpful to the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The people of Kerala observed a hartal on 5 January in protest against the repressive policy. The newspapers suspended their publication on that day. A public meeting was arranged on the Calicut beach in the evening but the leaders who defied the ban were arrested.⁷ The hartal observed at Cannanore also was a complete success. Three days later the police handled those who addressed a public meeting at Cannanore roughly. A Congress procession at Tellicherry was forcibly dispersed by the police who dragged the fallen volunteers along the dusty roads. Those who picketed liquor shops and foreign-cloth shops or addressed public meetings were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.⁸ The incidents

5. Mr. Martin, District Superintendent of Police, went with a posse of constables to the *Mathrubhumi* Buildings unaware of the fact that the office of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee had already been shifted from that place. On searching the place, he found nothing incriminating.
6. Section 144 was enforced, for example, at Calicut for two months with effect from 5 January 1932 and public meetings were banned. Notice under section 144 was served on twenty-two persons including Messrs. K. Kelappan, K. A. Damodara Menon, Syed Mohamed, K. Madhavanar, U. Gopala Menon, K. Raman Menon, K. Madhava Menon, P. I. Kaimal, M. Govinda Menon, T. Hassan Koya Mulla, Mrs. Margaret Pavamani and others.
7. Smt. Kartyayani Amma and Messrs. K. A. Damodara Menon and P. Krishna Pillai were arrested on the spot and on 16 January sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for five months and simple imprisonment for one month.
8. The students of Cannanore conducted a procession in the town and were lathi-charged by the police. Later Mr. K. P. Gopalan and other volunteers were arrested. Mr. Vishnu Bharateeyan was sentenced to eighteen months' rigorous imprisonment and payment of a fine of Rs. 200 in lieu of which to two months' rigorous imprisonment under section 145 and six months' rigorous imprisonment under section 188; Mr. K. P. Gopalan and Mr. K. Kunhappa Nambiar were awarded each six months' rigorous imprisonment and fined Rs. 200; Messrs. K. M. Soman, O. Krishnan, M. K. Achuthan, M. Chandu Nambiar, K. Kelan and T. Malangan were each sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one year under section 145 and for six months under section 188 and fined Rs. 100. Mr. K. K. Menon was arrested at Bombay. Mr. P. K. Gopalan Nambiar and Mr. N. P. Damodaran were sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment for addressing public meetings at Guruvayur. Several volunteers were roughly handled by the police at Cannanore and Tellicherry. Mr. R. Krishna Iyer who was Treasurer of the

in Malabar reflected the general upsurge throughout India. Babu Rajendra Prasad, Vithalbhai Patel, Nariman, Dr. Ansari, Satyamurthy, Prakasam, Rajagopalachari and other leaders were arrested one after another. An orgy of violent repression was in fact let loose throughout the land.

On the demise of his mother, Mr. L. S. Prabhu had nominated Mr. M. Govinda Menon as the second Dictator. He was arrested on 14 January while addressing a public meeting at Calicut and sentenced to imprisonment, Mr. Menon nominated Mr. E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad, then an undergraduate student, as the next Dictator. He was arrested at Calicut along with a few volunteers on 17 January for having defied the ban on public meetings imposed by the Government. A severe lathi-charge was made on those who attended the meeting."

Almost every day there were several arrests of persons who picketed liquor shops or defied the prohibitory order in different parts of Malabar.¹⁰ It became a problem for the Government to

Bombay Provincial Congress Committee since 1928 was arrested at Bombay under the new ordinance and sentenced to six months' imprisonment along with Mr. K. F. Nariman.

9. Those who shouted '*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*' got the lathi blows on their heads though the slogan was not as "seditious" as to deserve such inhuman treatment. Even those who were not Congressmen or civil resisters were moved by the excesses of the police. Dewan Bahadur Rangachari voiced his protest against them. The Satyagrahis including Mr. E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad were handcuffed when they were produced in court and one of them, Mr. Mannarghat K. C. Gopalan Unni Nair had been considerably belaboured, it was alleged, at the police station. The *Mathrubhumi* (dated 21 January 1932) protested against the Government's callousness for, the accused had neither resorted to acts of violence nor attempted to run away and their handcuffing only served to reveal the vendetta of the Government against the helpless Satyagrahis. Particularly the beating of boy volunteers until they fell down unconscious was most reprehensible. A resolution was sought to be passed at a meeting of the Malabar District Board held on 20 January protesting against the repressive policy.
10. Mr. E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a total period of three years and fined Rs. 100 under section 17 (2) of Criminal Law Amendment Act and section 145; Mr. K. C. Gopalan Unni Nair and Mr. G. Gopalakrishna Rao to rigorous imprisonment for two years each under section 17 (1) and section 145; Mr. C. Kittunni Menon to that for three years and a half under sections 117 and 145; Mr. L. S. Prabhu to that for two years; sentences of imprisonment for different periods were also passed on Mr. K. C. Achuthan Nair who had already been a Satyagrahi volunteer at Vedaranyam, and Messrs. Pudukode Rama Iyer, K. R. Kumaran (of Cannanore), P. Kesavan Nair (of Panangadi), and M. K. Krishnan Nair, to quote only a few examples. Outside Malabar, Mr. K. Narayanan Nambiar and Mr. C. O. Narayanan Nambiar were arrested at Kalahasti and taken to the Central Jail, Vellore.

maintain the arrested persons in jails as their number began to swell. The police now adopted the tactics of caning the volunteers without arresting them. The cruelties perpetrated at this time in Malabar were unworthy of any civilized Government.

Mr. K. C. K. Naha of Parappanangadi, the next Dictator, was arrested at Calicut and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment under sections 188 (2) and 143. Smt. Lalitha Prabhu, daughter of the great educationist, Mr. M. Seshagiri Prabhu, and wife of Mr. L. S. Prabhu, next took up the leadership. She was arrested towards the end of January along with two other women volunteers for picketing shops at Tellicherry; and the sympathetic crowd of spectators was dispersed after a vicious lathi-charge. Mrs. Prabhu was awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment and fined Rs 1,000 by Mr. D. W. Dodwell, Joint Magistrate, Tellicherry. On his bidding she surrendered, towards the fine, all the jewels on her body except the *tali* or *mangalya sutra* which she was expected to wear, like any other Hindu lady, as long as her husband was alive. Though it was explained to the Magistrate that the *tali* was sacred for all Hindu women and could not be removed even under civil law, he ordered a police constable to remove it whereupon Mr. Prabhu requested the co-accused women to do so.¹¹

The continued police excesses urged more and more volunteers to step into the cauldron of suffering, many of them from Cochin and Travancore as well. Reports poured in, of further arrests for picketing, from Calicut, Cannanore, Karuvattur, Palghat, Tellicherry, Feroke and other places. The first day of February was celebrated as the National Flag Day throughout Kerala. Mr. Pariyat Moosa,

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11. The high-handedness of the British Magistrate and his callous disregard of sacred custom provoked universal indignation in India and several Women's Organisations including that at Nagpur started an agitation for an enquiry into his conduct. Mr. V. P. Narayanan Nambiar raised the issue in the Madras Legislative Council, which also came before the British House of Commons. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, Mrs. Jinarajadas, Mrs. Ammu Swaminathan and Mrs. Sen brought the matter to the notice of Mr. M. Krishnan Nair, then Law Member. Finally the Government of Madras condemned, in a press note issued on 23 February, the action of the Magistrate and got the *tali* restored to Mrs. Prabhu. Mr. Dodwell himself later expressed regret for his action.

Swami Anand Tirth, a relative of Mrs. Prabhu was refused permission by Mr. Dodwell to interview her. She was taken to the Vellore Jail, escorted by two constables but no woman warder.

Municipal Councillor of Tellicherry, was the next Dictator to be arrested.¹² while leading a procession on that day.

It was also decided that the fourth day of every month should be celebrated as Gandhi Day. A crowd gathered at Calicut under the banyan tree to the west of the Zamorin's College on 4 February under the leadership of Smt. C. Kunhikavu Amma, the seventh Dictator, Mrs. Margaret Pavamani, Smt. Padmavathy Amma and others. A procession led by Mr. M. K. Karunakara Menon joined them and wended its way along the roads of the town when the leaders were arrested by the police. Other processions in the town on the same day were forcibly dispersed.¹³

The hoisting of the tri-colour flag at the Sub-Collector's Office, Tellicherry, and the placing of the nameboard *Swaraj Bhavan* there meanwhile created some flutter in official circles. There was a bonfire of foreign cloth in front of the Government Victoria College, Palghat. Mr. R. Raghava Menon was arrested at his residence in Palghat and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years and a half. The eight Dictator, Mr. Potheri Damodaran of Cannanore, was sentenced to four weeks' imprisonment for leading a procession, and Mr. Pamban Madhavan, along with others, was severely caned by the police for the same reason. Mr. V. Sankaranarayana Menon was arrested at Ottapalam and awarded the sentence of imprisonment for one year and a half. The volunteers who either picketed foreign-cloth shops and liquor shops or took part in processions at Ramanattukara, Cheruvatur, Ponnani, Parappanangadi, Vytiri, Kasergod, Hosdurg, Perambra, Nadapuram and other places were arrested and many of them lathi-charged. In short the whole of Malabar soon got politically restless.

12. He was fined Rs. 500 and awarded rigorous imprisonment for two years and a half by the Joint Magistrate, Tellicherry. He said in the court that it was his religion, rather than anything else, which made him join the Civil Disobedience Movement, for Islam stands for the fight to protect freedom against injustice and oppression even on the part of the Government.
13. As regards the incidents in other parts of Malabar on that day, Mr. Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar and other volunteers were arrested at Badagara for holding a public meeting. Mr. Nambiar was awarded two years' imprisonment. At Tellicherry Mr. Chandroth Kunhiraman Nair who addressed a public gathering was beaten with lathi until he fell down unconscious and dragged for some distance to the police van. He was awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment. Mr. C. Unni Nair was arrested at Naduvannur. At Ponnani Mr. P. Krishna Panikkar and Mr. K. Narayanan Elayad who shouted slogans and led a procession were caned and arrested.

The ladies did not lag behind, Miss Matilda B. Kallen, with a few other volunteers, was arrested for leading a procession at Quilandy on 10 February. A few of the Red Shirt Volunteers of the *Yuvak Sangh* too were arrested. The ladies at Palghat including Smt. P. Devaki Amma, Smt. P. Janaki Amma and Smt. P. Padminikutty were sentenced to imprisonment for varying terms by Mr. Carleston, Joint Magistrate. The ladies at Tellicherry, Smt. Sambhavi Amma and Smt. K. Madhavi Amma met with the same fate for having picketed foreign-cloth shops. At Calicut Smt. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma, the ninth Dictator and others were arrested on 22 February; charges were framed only against the ladies who were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years.¹⁴

A deputation consisting of Messrs. K. P. Raman Menon, B. Pocker Saheb and G. Sankaran Nair waited upon and gave Sir Mohamed Usman, Home Member, a complete picture of the police excesses perpetrated on the Satyagrahis in Malabar. Even those outside the Congress fold got disgusted with them and twenty-eight leading citizens of Malabar sent a memorial to the Government of Madras requesting them to put an end to the high-handed measures.¹⁵ The Members of the Madras Legislative Council gave expression to their feeling of abhorrence and on 27 February Mr. V. P. Narayanan Nambiar exposed the police horrors on the floor of the House.¹⁶

14. After the trial was over, Smt. Kuttimalu Amma was not permitted by Mr. Hashim, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, to take her baby in arms to jail. But as the jail rules permitted children below six being taken along with mothers, she took her baby too as she went to the Vellore Jail.
15. The memorialists included Messrs. K. P. Raman Menon, Manjeri Rama Iyer, B. S. T. Mudaliar, Narakasseri S. Krishnan, Rao Bahadur Dr. T. M. K. Nedungadi, Rao Saheb A. P. Chirukantan, Mr. V. S. Nataraja Mudaliar, Mr. A. Streichesen of the Malabar Christian College, Khan Saheb. K. Kunhahammad Koya, Mr. K. K. Subba Rao, Haji Abdul Sathar, Mr. C. K. P. Mammu Keyi, Mr. C. P. Savan Haji, Mr. G. Sankaran Nair, Dr. V. Krishna Menon and others.
16. It appeared, Mr. Nambiar said, that the Government had decided to wipe out not only the Congress organisation but also other institutions, connected with the Congress by accident, however lawful and peaceful their activities might be. The Indian Medical Association had already protested against the Government's callous policy towards those organisations which were nursing the injured volunteers. The property of Congressmen was being confiscated, they could not reside even in rented houses; their wives and children were given no peace of mind. The volunteers were being severely beaten and kicked, compelled to remain naked, transported by train and left at some unknown lonely way-side station at midnight. The reports of police excesses were pouring in not only from Malabar but other Districts in the Presidency also and they tended to destroy the people's loyalty and co-operation

Meanwhile the Municipal Council, Calicut, had already resolved not to purchase petrol and lubricating oil from British Companies, in protest against the illtreatment of the arrested volunteers¹⁷ by the police. The Municipal Council, Palghat, refused to present a welcome address to the Governor of Madras on his intended visit to the town.¹⁸ Thus the Local Self-Governing Bodies also recorded their protest against oppression.

Early in March, 1932, the District Magistrate, Malabar, cancelled under section 18 (A) of Arms Act the arms licences that had been issued to some of the influential and opulent persons in Malabar. In spite of appeals to the superior authorities arrests, lathi-charges and caning continued in different parts in unvarying intensity. Mr. P. Kumaran, the tenth Dictator, and Mr. K. Gopala Menon, the eleventh Dictator were arrested at Calicut in March while addressing public meetings and sentenced to imprisonment. Congress volunteers distributed nationalist bulletins in Government offices and courted arrest.¹⁹ They picketed foreign-cloth shops and judicial courts²⁰ and persuaded the lawyers to boycott them.

On the morning of 17 March the Deputy Superintendent, Central Jail, Cannanore, issued an unusual order that the political prisoners should retire to their cells: and on their understandable resistance ordered a lathi-charge. The Superintendent himself ordered another lathi-charge later in the course of which Messrs. A. K. Gopalan Nambiar, P. Krishna Pillai and P. Kesavan Nair were severely injured. The attack had been unexpectedly violent and over eight

and give a fillip to the Civil Disobedience Movement based upon non-violence, promoting even Moderates like Mr. Pariyat Moosa of Tellicherry to action. The Government, he warned, should not resort to unscrupulous methods which might generate feelings of anger and revenge in the masses.

17. The Government of Madras considered that the passing of the resolution was beyond the scope of the Council's jurisdiction and that it should be rescinded. The Council meeting on 14 March stuck to its old resolution. Some volunteers picketed the B.O.C. petrol shop at Calicut and on arrest, received the "traditional courtesies" that the police would extend on such occasions.
18. At the time of the Governor's visit a few volunteers made a demonstration and distributed pamphlets whereupon they were severely beaten by the police.
19. Mr. Sankarjee who was in Gandhiji's Ashram was arrested at Calicut in this connection.
20. At Quilandy the court peon dragged the volunteers out of the premises but they returned again and again, only to receive severe blows from the police.

hundred prisoners, including political prisoners, went on hunger strike for three days continuously, setting at nought the prison rules and regulations with stubborn resistance. They abandoned the strike only on the assurance of better treatment and amenities given by Mr. K. K. Subba Rao, Non-Official Visitor to the jail. There had been a similar lathi-charge in the Bellary Jail also a few days earlier and its repetition at the Central Jail, Cannanore, confirmed the notoriety already earned by the latter as a dark chamber of horrors.

Mr. S. K. Nambiar, the twelfth Dictator, was awarded two years' rigorous imprisonment for addressing a public meeting at Calicut. Mr. K. Madhava Menon, the thirteenth Dictator was arrested towards the end of March, 1932 and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one year and a half under section 17 (2) by Mr. K. Hashim, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Calicut. Mr. Menon characterised the evidence given by the prosecution witness as false and regretted that the police should have relied on it. Early in April the police burnt the tri-colour flag, already snatched by them from the Satyagrahis at Ferok. Mr. K. Kunjunni Menon, the fourteenth Dictator, was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one year and a half for having addressed a public meeting at Calicut. His successor, Mr. K. Divakaran Nambudiripad, was awarded rigorous imprisonment for two years on similar grounds.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, President-Elect of the Delhi session of the Indian National Congress²¹ was arrested, at this juncture, as well as the delegates. On 24 April, there was a Congress conference at Ganpat High School *maidan*, Calicut, when Mr. Mannarghat Kunhanunni Nair, the sixteenth Dictator, read out three resolutions which were intended to be placed before the Delhi session and got them passed. A procession in the town conducted on that day and another taken out two days later were dispersed by

21. All Provinces in India had been asked to send their delegates to the Delhi session of the Congress. Mr. H. Manjunatha Rao was selected to lead a batch of delegates from Kerala. The session was proposed to be held at Chandni Chowk. On the sudden and unexpected arrest of Padit Malaviya it was decided to have Seth Ranchod Lal as President. Nearly one thousand persons who prospective participators in the session were arrested and detained for several days in the Delhi Camp Jail and the District Jail. The injured and the sick volunteers were refused medical help. The party from Kerala was finally able to return with the financial help extended by a gentleman, Mr. Tiwari.

use of force.²² Similar processions led in Ferok, Badagara and Kasergod also were dispersed and the volunteers beaten black and blue. Yet the popular enthusiasm never waned and the boycott of all foreign goods was persistently advocated.²³

The Government now adopted the policy of awarding prizes²⁴ to the loyalists who helped the police by supplying information about the movements of the patriots. Meanwhile a huge tri-colour flag, found flying on the flag-mast in the premises of the Collector's office, Calicut, on 2 May, created not a little embarrassment to the authorities; a fully armed police contingent could on receipt of information, arrive at the scene only on the departure of the volunteers after the flag-salutation accompanied by the singing of national songs.

On 10 May, Mr. K. Raman Menon who had been virtually guiding the nationalist movement so far from behind the curtain was arrested at his residence in Calicut along with others present there at the time, under a warrant issued by the District Magistrate. He was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years, and Mr. Kunhanunni Nair, the Dictator, to that for one year.

It had been proposed to hold the sixth Kerala Provincial Conference at Calicut on 15 May, to prevent which a prohibitory order was clamped on the town, banning meetings and processions for two months. Though the police patrolled all the road-crossings and streets of the town for hours, not one of them was able to locate the exact venue of the conference or its time. The conference was held at dawn of the day in the extensive Manjalipadom *maidan* within the town, scarcely half a mile from the office of the District Superintendent of Police, Malabar. Mr. Samuel Aaron who had

22. At Palayam in Calicut the Police started caning the volunteers who squatted on the road, to be caned all the more. Mr. M. K. Warriar and Mr. Chellappan Nair were dragged away with cloth twisted round their necks and they sustained severe injuries.

23. At Calicut an appeal was found written on the body of a buffalo, to boycott foreign goods. A policeman who saw it took the animal to the temple tank at Tali, and gave it a thorough wash. After the job, as he opened his umbrella and started to proceed people began to laugh at him for meanwhile the same slogan had been written on it by urchins without his knowledge.

24. A Village Munsiff of Kadalundi was awarded a ring for having reported to the police about the activities of his nephew, an active Congress worker.

come down from Cannanore²⁵ presided over the meeting. After the formal flag-salutation, the printed addresses of the Chairman of the Reception Committee and the President were distributed among the participators. More than four hundred delegates had gathered from Kasergod in the north and Cochin and Travancore in the south, thoroughly aware of what would be in store for them at the hands of the police. Six resolutions were adopted at this conference, four of them similar to those at the Delhi Congress session and two bearing upon the Guruvayur Satyagraha and untouchability. Then a procession started from the *maidan* and reached the open space before the Chalapuram tank, where at a similar meeting under the presidentship of Mrs. Gracy Aaron, the above resolutions were passed and adopted. The procession then continued its course and broke up, after a further meeting held near the Tali Temple. Only then the police came to know of the developments, whereupon followed a series of arrests of all persons found wearing khadi in the town. Over one hundred persons including Mrs. and Mr. Samuel Aaron and Mr. E. K. Shankara Varma Raja, the seventeenth Dictator, were arrested in the course of the day, of whom only eleven were charged before the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Calicut.²⁶ All the accused were sentenced to imprisonment for one year and a half²⁷ except Mr. P. K. Kunhisankara Menon and Mr. E. K. Sankara Varma Raja who were to continue in jail for a further period of six months.

On 5 June, Mr. N. A. Krishnan Nair, the eighteenth Dictator was arrested when he led a procession of volunteers and tried to hold a public meeting at the Calicut beach. He was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for eighteen months and simple imprisonment for one month. In spite of the Government's ruthless policy of repression and the reactionary sentiments of loyalty to the British expressed by Mr. C. Krishnan, Editor of the *Mitavadi*, at the meeting of the South Malabar Tiyya *Mahajana Sabha* held at

25. Mr. Aaron, Mrs. Aaron and the delegates from North Malabar had been given a hearty send-off at the Cannanore railway station on the previous day, in the presence of police officers. The Deputy Superintendent of police travelled in the same train to Calicut. It is surprising therefore that the police could not prevent the holding of the conference in time.
26. The statement of the Sub-Inspector of police in the court that he had attended the conference *incognito* could not have been correct because if he had prior knowledge of the venue and time the whole Reserve Police in the town might have been rushed to the spot. It was contended that the Government had not declared the Reception Committee to be an unlawful body.
27. Subsequently Mr. Samuel Aaron was removed from the chairmanship of the Municipal council, Cannanore. (G. O. No. 2980 dated 30 July 1932).

Manjeri, the tempo of nationalist activity steadily rose. The authorities did not hesitate even to ban the staging of an ordinary drama at Chingapuram, in the belief that its profits would be added to the Congress Fund. By a prohibitory order, the Government banned the North Malabar District Conference proposed to be held at Cannanore on 15 June. Yet the conference was held at 5.45 a.m. on a *maidan* in front of the Kanathur Kavu within the Municipal limits, under the presidentship of Mr. Potheri Madhavan. This was followed by a procession and the distribution of the printed addresses. There were other meetings also in the town, including a conference of women. Nearly 102 persons were arrested on that day. Mr. Madhavan and Smt. P. M. Kamalavathi were sentenced to six months' imprisonment and fined. All hotel-owners in Cannanore were at this time asked not to give food to the Congress volunteers and house-owners were requested to evict them, if tenants.

The activities of the Congress volunteers spread even over remote villages where they paid house-to-house visits and imparted the rudiments of political education to the rural folk. The police on their part pursued more vigilantly their tactics of arresting, beating and letting off of the volunteers including women at midnight. The picketing of the P. and O. Bank and the Imperial Bank at Calicut in June, 1932 offended them all the more when they resorted to every form of cruelty in dealing with the volunteers.²⁸

The Congress volunteers offered forest Satyagraha also. Four of them²⁹ entered the Government forest near Kadakam village, ten miles from Kasergod, and cut down trees whereupon they were arrested and sentenced to imprisonment. The forest Satyagraha continued for the next few months, the volunteers getting themselves arrested, batch after batch.

Mr. K. C. Nambiar who succeeded Mr. K. T. Madhavan Nambiar as Dictator, was dragged by his neck to the police station as he set fire to a bundle of foreign cloth at Calicut and began to address a public meeting. Even innocent men were taken into custody every day all over Malabar and let off after questioning.

28. Mr. T. J. John and Mr. I. V. Nanu Panikkar were locked up in a room at the police station and given continuous beating until they were unconscious. Messrs. P. Subramanian Nambudiri and P. S. Velayudha Menon who hoisted the tri-colour flag at Ferok were severely beaten as they were taken in a bus and at the police station also they were fisted and kicked. On 27 June, Mr. K. K. Raman was dragged into the Town Police Station, Calicut, and given a course of vicious beating with lathi and cane as a result of which he became unconscious.

29. Messrs. Krishna Manavalitayar, Rama Hegde, Ramakrishna and Rama Rao.

Dr. T. V. Narayanan Nair was arrested in his dispensary at Tellicherry in July, 1932 under section 17 (1) of Criminal Law Amendment Act and awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment. The charge against him was that he had rendered medical aid to an injured Congress volunteer. Urged by humanitarian feelings, Mr. H. Manjunatha Rao organised on 15 July the 'Peoples' Hospital' at Chalapuram, Calicut, to render first aid to such sufferers,³⁰ in spite of threat from the police.

On his return journey from the Delhi session of the Indian National Congress, Mr. Manjunatha Rao had visited Allahabad and learnt that a part of the *Swaraj Bhavan* was being used as a Congress Hospital. He was also considerably impressed by the high morale of the Congress volunteers of Bombay who, after a vicious lathi charge for Civil Disobedience at Wadala, had received first aid from the local Congress Hospital served by some of the best doctors of the city. These experiences convinced Mr. Rao of the need for organising a similar first aid centre in Calicut also in order to make the volunteers more enthusiastic and self-confident.

A deputation consisting of Messrs. Manjeri Rama Iyer, Pocker Sahab, R. Suryanarayana Rao and B. S. T. Mudaliar meanwhile waited

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30. Mr. Manjunatha Rao organised the Congress Hospital with the co-operation of active nationalist workers like Messrs. P. Krishna Pillai, Manjeri Rama Iyer, C. K. Govindan Nair, P. Sekharan, A. K. Warriar and T. N. Ramunni Menon. Mr. P. K. Balakrishnan and Mr. K. Padmanabhan were particularly helpful in organising the Congress Hospital. Dr. V. I. Raman, Dr. Balakrishnan Nair, Dr. V. Krishna Menon, Dr. C. V. Narayana Iyer, Arya Vaidyan P. V. Rama Warriar, Dr. Shah, Dr. A. Chandu and Dr. A. B. Das rendered yeoman service to the volunteers in physical distress who would otherwise have gone without medical attention, in the new institution which was named 'Peoples' Hospital'. Mr. K. P. Narayana Pisharodi served as the compounder while Mr. P. Krishna Panikkar was the massage expert. The Hospital was visited by eminent persons like Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, Smt. Kasturba Gandhi and Miss. Wilkinson, member of the India League delegation. Financial assistance for the up keep of the Hospital came from Mr. B. S. T. Mudaliar, Seth Nagjee Amersee, Seth Vallabhadas Purushotham, Messrs. Shyamjee Sunderdas, M. Sundara Iyer, N. P. Abu, K. Chekkutti, S. G. Venkatachala Iyer, Krishna Bhat, Krishna Gounder and Dharma Raja Iyer, to mention only a few. The Peoples' Hospital functioned for one year and treated nearly four hundred volunteers, injured as a result of lathi-charge. Mr. Manjunatha Rao continued as the General Secretary of the 'Peoples' Hospital' and himself bore some amount of financial burden until he was sentenced to imprisonment for six months under section XVII (1) (a) and (b) for having run the institution.

on the Collector of Malabar on 25 July and tried to impress on him the need for crying a halt to the police excesses all over the District.

The Central Malabar District Conference was held on 31 July in the open space between Karuvanthuruthi and Pallitara, about a mile south-west of Ferok railway station. Contingents of Reserve Police patrolled the roads aimlessly without knowing the exact venue. Much to their chagrin Mr. K. C. Nambiar, Dictator, and Mr. K. P. Ramunni Menon, President-Elect cleverly managed to reach the place with nearly fifty delegates.³¹ The meeting was followed by a procession which marched to the railway station and was forcibly dispersed.³²

On 31 July, the South Malabar District Conference held at Varod, near Ottapalam, under the presidency of Mr. M. P. Kunhikunna Menon, member, Malabar District Board. As the procession subsequently conducted, reached the Ottapalam railway station, the volunteers were arrested and the leaders sentenced, after trial before the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Malappuram, to six months imprisonment.

Apart from the District Conferences referred to above there were several other Conferences also, held at the Taluk and Village levels.³³ Mr. K. T. Madhavan Nambiar the nineteenth Dictator, was

31. The police kept watch vigilantly throughout the previous day and night. Sentries remained at all road junctions leading to Ferok and also at the railway bridges at Kallai and Ferok to prevent the volunteers from attending the conference. Armed Reserve Police had been especially despatched to Ferok from Calicut. But the leader and delegates proceeded from Mankavu in boats along the Kallai river and got down a few hundred yards, to the west of the Kalli bridge at night. Then they went in twos and threes through various lanes and reached Cheruvannur. From there they proceeded to the venue of the conference, again in boats, thus defeating the police.
32. Mr. Menon who presided was sentenced by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Malappuram to six months' imprisonment.
33. The Chirakal Taluk Conference was held at 6.30 a. m. on 30 June, 1932 near the Baliapatam ferry under the presidency of Smt. Sundari Bhai Ganesh Pai. It endorsed the six resolutions adopted at the conference held earlier at Calicut. Nearly fifty participators were arrested by the police. The Kottayam Taluk Conference took place at 4.45 a. m. in an open place near the Koduvally Bridge, Tellicherry, under the presidency of Mr. T. Hariswaran Tirumumb. There was a meeting at Tiruvangad also, after which nearly fifty persons were arrested as they were participating in a procession through the town of Tellicherry. The Kurumbranad Taluk Conference was held at Azhiyur on 2 July, followed by two processions.

arrested at the time of the meeting of the Kurumbranad Taluk Conference. These various conferences roused the patriotic spirit of the people and served to reveal the morbid callousness of those who dealt with the volunteers.

The India League delegates from London arrived at Calicut on 31 August to study the political situation in Malabar. Miss Ellen Wilkinson and Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon met several persons representing different shades of opinion and discussed matters with them. They toured Malabar to get true picture of the momentum of the movement and the methods of the police.

All the processions conducted by the Congress volunteers in Malabar were being dispersed by the police with brutal force. The procession, for example, led on 13 August by the twentieth Dictator, Mr. K. C. Nambiar, at Calicut caused grievous hurt to the participants for there was a cruel lathi-charge by the police constables in the absence of their own officers: blood flowed from the limbs of most of the volunteers, Mr. Nambiar himself being the worst sufferer. At the police station also to which they were taken, blood trickled down to the floor from the bodies of the injured volunteers as they were roughly beaten again by the police officers themselves. A crowd gathered at the big bazaar and squatted on the road. For

The Kasargod Taluk Conference was held in front of the Customs Office on 9 July and presided over by Smt. T. Kamala Bai; it too was marked by a procession and the usual caning by the police. The Calicut Taluk Conference held at 6. a. m. on 28 August at Karaparamba led to the arrest of twenty-seven persons. Four persons were charged when the Ponani Taluk Conference was held at Valapad in September. The Valluvanad Taluk Conference held at Shoranur on 15 September led to a severe beating of the participants and the arrest of the leaders. The Wynad Taluk Conference took place in November 1932.

As to the conference at the village level, the Peralasseri Conference met at Vatakumbad, a valley of Udiram Hill, in defiance of prohibitory order and police patrol, on 17 July. A procession that accompanied it was dispersed by force. The Kalpathur Village Conference was held at 5.45 a.m. on 31 July under the presidentship of Mr. N. Ganapathi Moosad in the open space in front of the Western *nada* of Quilandy temple. It had been banned by the Government and several volunteers who took part in the procession were severely injured as the police attacked them. Smt. Narayani Amma who presided over the Kuttiadi Village Conference on 8 August was sentenced, along with three other volunteers, to rigorous imprisonment for six months. Mr. C. H. Kanaran presided over the Kadirur Village Conference held on 26 August. Smt. A. V. Lakshmi Amma, President of the Azhikode Village Conference held on 4 September was given one year's rigorous imprisonment.

nearly ten minutes the police indulged in a free play on all, with lathis and canes. The mob, though roused emotionally by the sight of naked violence, stuck to non-violence, expressing its sympathy for the volunteers by full-throated shouts of 'jai' in chorus. Those who fell down helplessly on the road were taken to the 'People's Hospital' for first aid. It was a terrible one-sided battle which brought out the triumph of non-violence that the twitching of muscles could not crush.

At this juncture the Central Jail at Cannanore again came into the glare of publicity. The 'C' class prisoners, Tamils, Telugus and Malayalees, resorted to hunger strike demanding tolerable food including butter-milk when the authorities attempted to feed them by force. A protest meeting was held at Calicut on 18 August to appeal to the Government to take immediate steps for the redress of their legitimate grievances.³⁴

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34. The condition of the 'C' class prisoners was really deplorable. Continuous persecution, lathi-charge and caning, bad food, solitary confinement and other methods of torture kept up an atmosphere of constant unrest. Those who resorted to hunger strike were badly treated and the reports about their precarious condition agitated the public mind in Malabar. Messrs. E. C. Kunjikannan Nambiar, E. C. Appu Nambiar, M. K. Warriar, P. K. Ramunni Nair and Kizhedath Damodara Menon were some of those who resorted to hunger strike. The meeting at Calicut was convened by Messrs. K. P. Raman Menon, Rao Sahab U. B. Srinivasa Rao, R. Suryanarayana Rao, T. Hassan Koya Mulla, U. Gopala Menon, T. V. Sundara Iyer and Muhammed Abdur Rahman. An appeal was made to treat the prisoners in a humane manner. It is amusing to take note of the explanation of the Law Member, Government of Madras, that butter milk was not included in the ordinary items of food in Malabar; Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer who presided over the meeting was highly critical of the introduction of caste system among the prisoners in so far as the needs of all were common as regards food, clothing and cleanliness. If those who caused disloyalty to the Government were, to be punishable for sedition according to section 124 A, those who wielded lathis should be charged first, he added.

On account of continuous persecution, Messrs. P. Kesavan Nair and E. C. Appu Nambiar resorted to hunger strike again later on 4 January 1933. Artificial feeding was resorted to in the Jail Hospital. Protest meetings were held throughout Kerala on 10 January. The strike ended only on 30 January after Mr. Kelappan's intervention.

The following table may give an idea of the course of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Malabar from January to August, 1932:

		Upto 31-7-1932	Upto 31-8-1932
1. Number of persons convicted	Men	408	
	Women	22	
	Total	430	447
2. Number of persons arrested by the police and beaten		1730	1940
3. Number of persons who were severely ill-treated in public or in the lock-up.		765	
4. Number of houses raided and searched		10	

The khaki-clad police gradually became so arbitrary and perhaps desperate that they began to arrest any khadi-clad person found in the town. In December, the police raided the Congress camp at Chalapuram in Calicut, arrested those found in the premises and took away papers and records. The neighbouring house tenanted by Mr. T. N. Ramunni Menon, Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, also was searched, and files and leaflets removed. These raids were a sequel to the finding of some records of the All-India Congress Committee by the police in Benares.

The various Political Conferences held from time to time at different places and the beatings and arrests in which the police indulged only served to whet the spirit of the people. Such conferences were held at Kuttuparamba, Tellicherry, Palghat, Kunhimangalam, Nileswaram, and Dharmadam; there were also Youth Conferences held at Cannanore and Taliparamba. The picketing of liquor

35. The Kuttuparamba Conference was held on 26 September, 1932, accompanied by a severe lathi charge by the police on five of the volunteers; the Palghat Conference was held on 6 October and the Kunhimangalam Conference on 12 October. The Nileswaram Conference convened on 8 December also was followed by severe beating by the police.

shops and the organisation of processions and demonstrations continued throughout Malabar.

Every one, irrespective of political bias, condemned the policy of the Government. The great conference of landlords and tenants held at Calicut on 5 February 1933 under the presidency of the Zamorin was the outcome of the reckless reassessment of land revenue and the existing economic depression. The landlords and tenants in Malabar became conscious of the weight of the burden and their own incapacity to pay only when the principle of enhanced rate of taxation on land came to be practically applied in some of the Taluks.

36. The volunteers who picketed liquor shop at Calicut on 11 October 1932 were severely injured by ill-treatment at the police station and removed to the 'Peoples' Hospital' for medical aid. On 14 October the volunteers who conducted a procession at Calicut were again severely beaten; the Satyagrahis now started the practice of addressing the audience in cinema theatres during intervals. Two volunteers arrested on 30 October were detained in Calicut Town Police Station for 24 hours without food. Mr. T. N. Ramunni Menon and ten other volunteers were sentenced to imprisonment for leading a procession at Calicut in December. On the occasion of the Gandhi Day celebration on 4 January 1933 two processions and a public meeting were arranged at Calicut when the participants were brutally handled by the police, several volunteers being arrested, and the injured being treated at the 'Peoples' Hospital. Similarly on 26 January, Independence Day, 43 persons were arrested at Calicut alone, including Mr. T. M. Raghavan, the twenty-second Dictator, for participating in a procession. He was awarded rigorous imprisonment for fifteen months. The picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops was in full swing in all places in Malabar, the arrested volunteers being let off after hours.

37. Later on 1 November, 1933 also there was a similar meeting held in the Town Hall, Calicut, to protest against the enhanced rate of land tax. Sir. C. Sankaran Nair made a spirited speech on the occasion. It was pointed out how the British, since the days of the East India Company, had been fleecing the people and throttling the industries. A giant among the members of the older generation. Sir Sankaran Nair's words carried much weight though charges of sedition might have been brought against any other person who gave expression to such sentiments.

On 5 November a meeting was held at Calicut to organise the *Kerala Karshaka Sangh* in villages in Malabar, in order to safeguard the interests of the agriculturists and effect the redress of their grievances caused by the enhanced rate of taxation. A committee was formed for this purpose consisting of Messrs. Manjeri Rama Iyer, U. Gopala Menon, K. P. Ramunni Menon, E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad, Sankara Narayanan Embrandiri, N. A. Krishnan Nair, K. A. Keralecyan, P. K. Ramunni Nair, P. Krishna Panikkar, T. Hassan Koya Mulla, M. Anunad and C. K. Govindan Nair.

The new rate had been fixed on certain assumptions which bore no relation to reality.³⁸

As expected, the establishment of the 'Peoples' Hospital' raised the morale of the enthusiastic volunteers who began to converge on Calicut from various parts of Malabar and for whose benefit several camps were organised. Sufficient amount of work had to be provided for them. A novel idea now struck Mr. A. K. Warriar then Manager of the Khadi Vastralaya, Calicut. He suggested the starting of a parallel Postal Service. In March 1933 Congress Post Offices were accordingly opened in different stations. Congress post cards and envelopes were printed and Congress volunteers acted as postmen carrying the letters from place to place. The new Post Office established at Calicut was ready to carry letters at rates lower than those charged by the Government.³⁹ The new postal service enraged the police all the more and they raided the Post Office on 10 March and arrested five volunteers found therein. Mr. H. Manjunatha Rao was declared to be the Post Master General and sentenced to the payment of Rs 100 as fine and three months' simple imprisonment by the District and Sessions Judge, Mr. King.

From February 1933 onwards the police was more alert than ever in arresting and producing the Congress volunteers before the Magistrates who indiscriminately punished them. The twenty-third Dictator, Mr. A. K. Warriar, and other volunteers led a procession at Calicut on 26 February and this led to a severe lathi-charge. At Palghat and Cannanore also there was severe beating of the volunteers. They were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. Mr. A. K. Gopalan Nambiar, the twenty-fourth Dictator was arrested at Cannanore on 15 March and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. Mr. K. I. Damodaran, the next Dictator, who with fourteen volunteers led a procession at Calicut on 26 March also had to face rigorous imprisonment. The Taj Mahal Hotel at Cannanore was closed and sealed towards the end of March and some volunteers found therein were arrested by the police.

In the middle of March, 1933 the British Government issued a Proclamation regarding the constitutional Reforms. Fourteen per cent of the total population of British India would be given franchise to the Provincial Legislatures. Provincial autonomy would be granted, subject to the wide powers exercisable by the Governor-General and Governors. The Governor-General would have special

38. The assumption was that the cost of 14½ measures of paddy was one rupee and that the price of 1000 cocoanuts was Rs 42, whereas the rates current were one rupee for 30-40 measures and Rs 25 for 1000 cocoanuts.

39. The price of the new post card was quarter anna and that of the envelope, half anna. Mr. A. U. Menon was in this connection sentenced to imprisonment under the Indian Postal Act.

control over military, foreign and ecclesiastical affairs. The Council of State would have 260 and the Central Legislative Assembly, 375 members. The new proposals were characterised as most unsatisfactory by the Liberal leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. M. R. Jayakar and the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri as well as by the leaders of the Muslim League. The Kerala Muslim Youth Conference at Calicut, held on 12 May 1933 under Mr. Yakub Hassan's presidentship condemned the White Paper on Reforms and appealed to the Muslims to take to khadi and *swadeshi*. The Second Kerala Muslim Conference under the presidentship of Sir Mohamed Habibullah also condemned the White Paper.

Except in the town of Calicut and a few other places in Malabar the Civil Disobedience Movement had been over-shadowed during 1932 by the Guruvayur Temple Entry Satyagraha and anti-untouchability work in which almost every nationalist leader outside jail plunged at the time. As for Calicut, volunteers from outside went to the town to carry on the work of picketing, conducting processions, making non-violent demonstrations, distributing leaflets and nationalist literature and addressing public gatherings in the face of weapons frequently drawn by the police from the chamber of horrors. They kept the flag flying aloft under trying circumstances. The social question of temple entry partially took the wind, it must be admitted, out of the political sail. It diverted for a while the popular attention originally concentrated on the main target of political freedom.

On 30 April, 1933 Gandhiji announced his intention to go on fast for three weeks with effect from 8 May. He was released from jail. He remained at *Parnakuti*, the residence of Lady Thackersey at Poona. He gave the hint that the Civil Disobedience Movement was not being conducted strictly on the lines laid down by him. He made it quite clear that he would not hesitate to sacrifice number for quality in so far as the success of the movement depended on the sincerity of the workers. He also requested the Government to release all political prisoners. On 29 May he broke his fast and among the items of light food that he partook on the first day was some honey sent by the Harijan students of Trichur. In view of the delicate health of Gandhiji, Mr. M. S. Aney, President of the Indian National Congress, issued directions on 17 June, 1933, suspending the Civil Disobedience Movement, including no tax campaign until 31 July. This gave some respite to the police and resulted in the release of the prisoners in jail. Gandhiji sought an interview with the Viceroy in July, clarifying his position and that of the Congress but it was refused. Gandhiji left for Sabarmati on 18 July and the *Ashram* there, started eighteen years earlier, was closed on 25 July. He gave notice to the Government that he would go to Ras village to preach individual Satyagraha.

In general review of this period one may say that it was one of lawless law. It is refreshing to note that as early as January 1932 Mr. E. C. Wood, District Magistrate, Malabar, had realised the futility of a policy of unimaginative repression. He noticed that at Cannanore and Tellicherry, volunteers had been beaten when they were not present in numbers sufficient to form an unlawful assembly; and that in one case "Two picketers were beaten until they could not stand, they then crawled back and began to picket again....." Such methods, he felt, would arouse sympathy for the beaten and alienate the police from the people and "are illegal."⁴⁰ The subordinate police officers had been instructed that "illegal beatings should not occur." It is unhappily surprising how the police should have violated these instructions as the Civil Disobedience Movement gathered momentum. Probably they might have desired to please their immediate masters by their zeal or allowed themselves to be caught in the net of frustrated frenzy. The beating of the prisoners in the Central Jail, Cannanore, on 17 March, 1932, at the orders of the Deputy Superintendent and in the presence of the Superintendent himself, proclaimed the urgent need for the reform of jail administration so far as the purity of the motives and methods of the Satyagrahis was unquestioned. The detention of those who break the law is of course the legitimate right of any Government but it should have been accompanied by a humane attitude to them, educated and cultured as they were and non-violent and peaceful as their method was. While it was necessary to maintain law and order there ought to have been some law and order in the discharge of that task. With the advent of ordinance rule, many things had been done to destroy the popular confidence in the sense of justice of the British Indian Government and of its over-zealous minions.⁴¹

It cannot be that the higher authorities were not aware of what was happening at the lower levels for representations had been made at appropriate times to the District Collector, the Home Member and the Law Member of the Government of Madras and the matter had been raised on the floor of the Madras Legislature as well. There was a total lack of appreciation of the fact that the invasion of the inner-most sanctuaries of the political convictions of a whole people, wedded to the ideal of national freedom through non-violence, was pernicious in itself and twice cursed. The people were hoping that even the longest night would be broken by the first streak of dawn.

40. Letter (Confidential) from Mr. E. C. Wood to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, January 1932. (See file No. 771 dated 25-5-1932).

41. The subordinate authorities even went to the ridiculous extent of shaving the heads of the political prisoners in the Central Jail, Cannanore,

CHAPTER 23

GURUVAYUR SATYAGRAHA

It would be proper at this stage to refer to the developments in connection with the Guruvayur Temple which, to some extent, diverted popular attention from the political struggle against the British to the social sphere in Malabar.

The uplift of the depressed sections of the Hindu community had always formed an important aspect of work of the Indian National Congress in Malabar. The social disabilities from which the depressed classes like the Nayadis, Pulayas, Cherumas and Kanakkans suffered for centuries assumed vast proportions and the nationalist leaders including Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer and Mr. K. Kelappan constantly sought to make the people realise that the denial of elementary rights of citizenship to them amounted to a great social injustice. The frequent reports of outrageous assaults on the depressed classes by the members of the higher castes inspired the Congress workers to pay more attention to this important social problem. Mr. Kelappan as well as other leaders felt that untouchability could be wiped out only if the depressed classes were permitted to enter the public temples. Mr. Kelappan submitted on 9 July 1931 a representation to Gandhiji and the Congress Working Committee regarding the need for temple entry movement in Malabar. Enlightened classes in Travancore also had been paying serious attention to this issue. Finally on 2 August 1931 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee passed for a formal resolution, sponsored by Mr. U. Gopala Menon, on the question of temple entry.

On 5 September, Mr. Kelappan inaugurated the great temple entry campaign, addressing several meetings on the need to eradicate the evil of untouchability. A large meeting was held at the sacred place, Guruvayur, for enlisting popular support in this matter.

Unfortunately, there were differences of opinion on the issue of temple entry among the members of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee themselves. At their meeting at Guruvayur, these differences became sharper, the younger generation being highly critical of the policy of the old guard. Those members of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee who hitherto had been at the helm of affairs resigned, yielding place to new. A Working Committee with Mr. L. S. Prabhu as President was formed. They devoted more time and attention to village re-construction. Many *grama kshema sabhas*

were formed under Mr. Devadhar's inspiration to promote rural welfare while *desa sevika sanghs* did splendid work in organising khadi and *swadeshi* propaganda.

Meanwhile the temple entry campaign was vigorously started in Ponani Taluk, the propagandists like Mr. Kelappan and Mr. Madhavanar touring the area and addresesing public meetings.¹ As the new movement gathered momentum the orthodox Hindus led by Mr. Pannatur Goda Sankara *Valia Raja* met at Guruvayur on 20 September, 1931 and requested Mr. Kelappan not to precipitate matters until the return of Gandhiji and Pandit Malaviya from the Round Table Conference at London. But the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, meeting at Alleppey in the same month, resolved to carry on an intensive propaganda for temple entry all over Kerala. A Satyagraha Committee, with Mr. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai as President, was formed for this purpose.² At a largely attended meeting, held again at Alleppey on 21 September, a resolution was passed emphasising the urgent need for the opening of all Hindu temples to the untouchables. The members of the Temple Entry Committee in the south including Mr. Padmanabha Pillai and Mr. C. V. Kunjuraman toured all over Kerala, appealing to the conscience of the orthodox Hindus while a *jatha* of sixteen volunteers started on the morning of 21 October from Cannanore in the north to take part in the proposed Satyagraha at Guruvayur. Mr. P. S. Kesavan Nambudiri, President of the Nambudiri Youth League, welcomed the decision regarding Satyagraha as a highly progressive step and offered his whole-hearted support.

However many orthodox Hindus, apart from a few Congressmen themselves, sincerely believed that the time was not yet ripe for launching such a great movement. The absence of Gandhiji, the architect of Satyagraha, they thought, was a serious handicap. It was true that he had not so far blessed the proposed movement with his approval. It was also thought desirable that the attention of the masses should not be diverted from constructive work including prohibition, boycott of foreign goods and *swadeshi* propaganda in so far as a bitter struggle against imperialism was sure to be started if Gandhiji were to return empty-handed. As the alienation of the sympathies of an influential section of the people might interfere with

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1. Messrs. Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar, A. K. Gopalan Nambiar, P. Kesavan Nair and P. Krishna Panikkar did a lot of work in this connection.
 2. Mr. K. Kelappan was the Secretary, Mr. P. Achuthan, the Treasurer, Mr. K. G. Gopalakrishnan the Joint Secretary and Mr. C. Kuttan Nair, the Publicity Officer of this Committee. Dr. C. I. Rugmini Amma, Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma, Mr. Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, Mr. V. T. Bhattathiripad and Mr. K. P. Kayyalakal were actively associated with the temple entry propaganda.

constructive work, a few cautious, though progressive-minded, men were of the view that it would be better to create a healthy climate for the passing of a Temple Entry Bill through effective propaganda and education of both the masses and the classes than to hastily start an unpopular movement with doubtful concrete results.

At a special meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee held at Calicut on 18 October, it was resolved to begin the temple entry Satyagraha at Guruvayur on 1 November, 1931. That day was observed in Malabar as All-Kerala Temple Entry Day with a programme of prayers, processions, collection of funds and public meetings. Messages were received from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Mr. K. M. Munshi, Dr. Savarkar, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Mrs. Kamala Devi, Acharya Sir P. C. Ray, Kasturba Gandhi and other leaders, wishing the movement all success. The *jatha* of sixteen volunteers led by Mr. T. Hariswaran Tirumumb had already arrived on foot from Cannanore. The Satyagraha started at day-break on the appointed day when the volunteers from all parts of Kerala, clad in spotless white, went in procession from their camp at Guruvayur. It was an awe-inspiring and touching scene when the procession reached the eastern gate of the famous temple. A strong contingent of police was on the spot, under the District Superintendent of Police, Malabar. The thorny fences, put up by the temple authorities all around, with strong guards posted to protect them, were symbolic of the artificial barriers which were set up and sanctified through the ages by rigid custom and which separated man from God. The forces of reaction, with their back to the wall, were getting ready to fight a futile battle. Evidently a closed heart and an open temple could not get on together.

An *avarna* volunteer and a *savarna* volunteer, posted at each gate, chanted *sankirtan* and tried to enter the temple; each batch of volunteers stood at the post continuously for three hours. In spite of the large crowds that gathered, there was perfect peace and the first few days went off without any unpleasant incident.

The Satyagraha Day was celebrated in almost every place in Kerala and also in cities like Madras, Bombay, Colombo, Calcutta and Delhi. But surprisingly enough, a discordant note was struck at a public meeting of Tiyyas at Manjeri which condemned in scathing terms the Satyagraha Movement but advocated the boycott of temples. On the other hand, the Working Committee of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha passed a resolution at Delhi appealing to all Hindus, especially of Nasik and Malabar, to redress the numerous disabilities of the depressed classes and to allow them rights and privileges on terms of equality with the high castes. On 21 November, which coincided with the holy *Ekadasi* day, Mr. Kelappan and a few

women volunteers offered Satyagraha. In December Mr. C. Rajagopalachari and Mr. Nariman visited Guruvayur where they appealed to the authorities to open the temple to all Hindus.

Mr. T. Subramanian Tirumumb, Captain of the temple entry campaign, was arrested at Guruvayur on 7 November. Unnikrishnan, a Harijan boy of twelve, who was observing Satyagraha along with other volunteers, was beaten by a person. From this time onwards gradually physical force came to be used against the Satyagrahis. Mr. P. Krishna Pillai was mercilessly beaten by the temple servants for having rung the sacred bell at the *mukha mantapa* in front of the *sanctum sanctorum*. Mr. A. K. Gopalan Nambiar, Captain of the volunteers, was subsequently surrounded near the temple by the reactionaries and beaten black and blue. This unwarranted action was much resented and the enraged members of the public removed the fences by force. The authorities now realised that though the Satyagrahis might be peaceful and non-violent, the public would not be in a mood to tolerate the violence of the temple servants.

The thirteenth annual conference of the Nambudiri Youth League held in December, 1931 at Taliparamba passed a resolution favouring temple entry for all Hindus including Adi Dravidas. A similar resolution was passed by the *Yogakshema Sabha* as well.

The accession, to the Zamorin's *gadi*, at this time of one who had retired from public life as a District Judge and developed a cosmopolitan outlook, was expected by many persons to bring about a solution to the thorny problem of temple entry. He however took the stand that as the hereditary trustee of the temple he was not in a position to throw it open to all Hindus in contravention of existing custom and tradition. On New Year Day, 1932 the new Zamorin ordered the temple to be closed to all worshippers. The Satyagrahis went round the outer walls of the temple freely. The Zamorin's decision, apparently a counsel of despair, was resented by all Hindus in Kerala. Mr. Kelappan, through a letter, persuaded the Zamorin to remove the stain on Hinduism by helping the depressed classes. On 28 January, the Zamorin ordered the re-opening of the temple whereupon the volunteers renewed their Satyagraha.

Meanwhile Mr. L. S. Prabhu had met Gandhiji at Bombay, prior to the latter's arrest on 4 January, 1932. Gandhiji was definitely of the view that the social issue of the eradication of untouchability which the *savarnas* owed to the low castes was no less important than the serious political or constitutional issues which were current at the time. Social reformers must be ready to face any contingency, especially in the matter of religion. Gandhiji did not contribute to the view that the Satyagraha should be stopped and that a legal solution to the problem ought to be sought. It was

not enough that the temple authorities would provide separate places of worship for the benefit of the low castes. Even in regard to a private temple, it was unjust to deny admission to the low castes when others were permitted to enter it.

The Temple Entry Committee constituted by the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was dissolved on 6 January, 1932 as the latter body itself had been declared to be unlawful. A special committee was now formed under the leadership of Smt. P. M. Kamalavathi to organise the Satyagraha.

A prohibitory order was served subsequently on the *avarnas* by which they were prevented from approaching the precincts of the temple within a radius of fifty yards. Mr. A. K. Gopalan Nambiar, Captain of the volunteers, Mr. N. P. Damodaran, Publicity Officer and Mr. Kunhikrishnan, Secretary of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam*, were arrested at the Satyagraha camp on 8 January for having addressed a public meeting to protest against the arrest of Gandhiji; they were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for six months.

The temple entry movement got a fillip in April 1932 when Mr. P. S. Warriar, Founder and Proprietor of the Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakal, declared the *Viswambharan* Temple, privately owned by him open to all Hindus, including the depressed classes.

The Temple Entry Satyagraha took a new turn on 13 September, 1932 when Gandhiji announced his decision to fast unto death in the context of the decision of the Government to have separate electorates for the scheduled castes in India. The nation was shocked at the news and many leaders were on the move to make him desist from the attempt. The Hindu leaders, including Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. M. C. Raja, met in conference at Bombay. Many temples were now opened to the low castes in Bengal, the Punjab and other places in North India. Mr. Kelappan, the Director of the Satyagraha at Guruvayur, considered it as the most opportune moment to attract public attention to the temple entry movement in Kerala. On 18 September, 1932 he announced his resolve to fast unto death before the Guruvayur Temple in case the untouchables would continue to be shut out of it. The Acting President of the Congress, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya requested him not to undertake the fast as it might lead to unhappy repercussions. Yet Mr. Kelappan started the fast on 21 September, the day on which Gandhiji commenced his at the Yerawada Jail. In the small hours of the morning, after prayer, Mr. Kelappan impressed

on the Satyagrahis the importance of their mission.³ Amidst touching scenes, he started at 6.30 a. m. from his camp, accompanied by a *bhajan* party of thirty satyagrahis, and took his stand, at the eastern gate of the temple, for victory or for death. He felt honestly that he should at that time help Gandhiji who was doing *tapasya* for the sake of the depressed classes. In the evening there was a largely attended public meeting in which Mr. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai and Mr. Madhavanar also participated. An appeal was made subsequently to the public to celebrate 25 September as *Guruvayar Day*, by holding meetings all over the Madras Presidency.⁴

There was much activity now among the intelligentsia of the country, directed almost entirely towards the preservation of Gandhiji's life. The general opinion was that the demand for temple entry should be conceded and untouchability abolished as a necessary preliminary to the abandonment, by Dr. Ambedkar and his followers, of their demand for separate electorates. At various meetings held in this connection in Malabar, the Tiyva community took a prominent part asserting that they did not need any separate electorate.⁵

On 22 September, 1932, a deputation⁶ of the leading citizens of Calicut led by Mr. K. P. Raman Menon waited on the Zamorin at his palace and requested him to convene a conference of all sections of Hindus for the discussion of the important issue of temple entry. The Zamorin replied that he did not consider it proper either to convene the suggested conference or participate in it; as the leader of the Hindu community in Malabar and as a trustee of the Guruvayar

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3. Mr. Kelappan told them that theirs was not to despair but to enthuse the whole world with their own enthusiasm. "Your responsibility," he added, "is great. I may no longer be with you and no longer will be able to talk and I shall pass in peace. Happy to know all will be well with you in the cause. Everything depends on your courage endurance and enthusiasm. Bless me". (See the *Hindu* dated 22-9-1932).
 4. The appeal was issued by Messrs. U. Gopala Menon, C. K. Govindan Nair, A. K. Warriar, and T. N. Ramunni Menon. On 25 September, a procession, half a mile long, went round the Guruvayar Temple and a meeting was held in front of the eastern gate and addressed by Mr. N. P. Damodaran, Mr. Madhavanar and Mr. Subramanian Tirumumb. At Calicut on the same day, a public meeting was held in the Town Hall and addressed by Mr. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer and Mr. U. Gopala Menon.
 5. See the report of the District Magistrate, Malabar, dated 24 September, 1932. At the meeting on 20 September at Calicut there were 600 Tiyas and fifty Pulayas who expressed themselves in favour of joint electorates.
 6. Besides the leader, the deputation included Mr. Manjeri Rama Iyer, Mr. K. V. Suryanarayana Iyer and Mr. A. K. T. K. M. Guptan Nambudiripad.

Temple, he felt that it would be wrong on his part to attempt to bring about innovations opposed to the traditional practices. Such an attempt, he thought, would be misunderstood and misrepresented; any decision to be made by the suggested conference was bound to affect every Hindu household in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. He further felt that a decision taken at a meeting held under the auspices of the Zamorin alone, without the co-operation and approval of the Maharajas of Cochin and Travancore, would not be worth the paper on which it was written; it would not only be ignored completely but positively condemned and publicly ridiculed in the Princely States: if the so-called untouchables were to be admitted into the Sri Padmanabha Swamy Temple and the temples at Vaikom and Trichur, the way would be made smooth for applying the same or similar practice to Guruvayur, he added.

A few prominent *savarna* leaders of Guruvayur now requested the Zamorin through a memorial to open the temple.⁷ Mr. G. D. Birla, Dr. Moonje, Sir Purushothamdas Thakurdas and Mr. Jammadas Mehta sent telegrams to the Zamorin requesting him to throw open the Guruvayur Temple to all.⁸ The *savarna* Hindus who gathered at Guruvayur from other parts of Kerala also made a similar appeal to the Zamorin.⁹

On 25 September 1932 a reactionary deputation of twenty-five persons, on the other hand, waited on the Zamorin to point out that under section 10 of the Hindu Religious Endowment Act no trustee

7. They included Messrs. A. P. Krishnan Nair, P. K. Venkatachala Iyer, U. K. Panikkar, Perumbayil Sankunni Menon, N. Krishnan Bhattathiripad, C. Unni Raja, P. Ravunni Menon, V. Kuttirama Menon, V. Gopalan Nair, M. K. Menon, K. S. Nambiar and I. B. Panikkar.
8. "I have heard with much distress about Mr. Kelappan's fast. In view of the new development I strongly implore you to throw open Guruvayur to all depressed brethren and give a lead in South India" (Birla) "Earnestly request you to respect the universal feeling amongst Hindus all over India by opening temple to depressed classes. Kindly throw open Guruvayur Temple and save Mr. Kelappan's life" (J. Mehta).
9. They included Messrs. E. V. Krishna Pillai, P. B. Thampi, K. T. Chandu Nambiar and V. T. Bhattathiripad. A *jatha*, 150 strong, led by Mr. M. P. Govinda Menon reached Guruvayur on 27 September, encircled Mr. Kelappan's bed and retired after paying homage. Similar *jathas* arrived from Payyannur and Ponani as well.

could do anything against the usages of the temples entrusted to him.¹⁰

Meanwhile a deputation consisting of Messrs Manjeri Rama Iyer, T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, K. Madhavan Nair and Shyamji Sunderdas tried to persuade Mr. Kelappan to postpone the fast. Two lawyers of Guruvayur sent a telegram at this juncture apprising Gandhiji in jail of the situation that arose from the fast. Gandhiji felt that he should not embarrass Mr. Kelappan and that if a selfless and great worker like him were to be lost, it would be a disgrace to his countrymen and those near him. On 26 September, Pandit Malaviya sent a telegram to Mr. Kelappan from Poona informing him that as the Poona Pact¹¹ had meanwhile totally changed the general situation in India the latter should put an end to his fast and that he would arrive in Malabar as soon as his engagements elsewhere were over. By another telegram Pandit Malaviya appealed to the Zamorin also to open the temple to the depressed classes, subject to prescribed rules, as such an act would only strengthen Hinduism. Mr. Kelappan did not accept the advice of Pandit Malaviya, while the Zamorin failed, in spite of appeals from all parts of India, to rise to the occasion and earn a living name as a great reformer.

Mr. Kelappan got physically weaker day by day and his fast paralysed the other activities of the Congress in Malabar for the time being. An All-Kerala *Savarna* Conference was held at Guruvayur on 29 September under the presidentship of Mr. M. Madhusudan Thangal, M. L. C. A large number of men and women from all parts

10. On the same day, a procession marched to the Zamorin's palace after a meeting held at Calicut but only Mr. A. K. Warriar and Mr. H. Manjunatha Rao were permitted to meet him. He informed them that he had no objection personally to throw open the temple and that he was doing his best to make others agree to the great reform.
11. The Poona Pact was signed in Yerawada Jail, after a conference presided over by Pandit Malaviya. The *savarna* leaders and the representatives of the depressed classes were present to discuss the question of representation of the latter in the Legislature. Pandit Malaviya, Dr. Ambedkar, Mr. Solanki, Mr. R. Srinivasan, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. M. R. Jayakar, Mr. M. C. Raja, Mr. Rajbhoj and Mr. N. Sivaraj signed the Pact. The Viceroy was requested to accept the Pact on behalf of the Government. It fixed the proportion of representation for the depressed classes in the different Provincial Legislatures and in the Central Legislature; their right to vote would be based on the recommendations of the Lothian Committee. The provision of reservation of seats for the depressed classes in general constituencies was accepted and Gandhiji ended his fast. The British Prime Minister accorded sanction for the pact.

of Kerala attended the conference, to which parties came in well-organised *jathas*. It was resolved that *savarna* volunteers, men and women, should fast within the Guruvayur Temple. A Committee of Action was formed with Mr. V. T. Bhattatiripad and Mr. K. A. Damodara Menon as Secretaries. It was also agreed that a deputation should wait on the Zamorin to effect a change of heart. Thus on 1 October 1932 a batch of twenty-four *savarna* volunteers started their fast within the temple and soon the number rose to fifty.

Gandhiji had meanwhile sent a telegram to Mr. Kelappan through Mr. C. Rajagopalachari to put an end to his fast if his own conscience would permit him to do so. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar made a similar request but Mr. Kelappan was unmoved. He stated that no individual is indispensable in the world and that the continuation of the fast, in his view, was most essential in the greater interests of the depressed classes. Messrs. A. Rangaswamy Iyengar, Dr. Subbarayan, T. R. Venkatarama Sastri and V. P. Narayanan Nambiar from Madras informed Mr. Kelappan on 28 September that in view of the proposed introduction of a Bill in the Madras Legislature penalising the non-admission of the low castes into temples he should give up the fast. Yet Mr. Kelappan stuck to his original decision on the ground that his fast was necessary to shape public opinion in favour of a change of heart leading to social unity.

The Zamorin now requested Gandhiji to advise Mr. Kelappan to postpone his fast for a few months. He contended that the admission of the low castes into the temple would wound the conscience of the orthodox Hindus and, to that extent, savour of violence rather than non-violence. Gandhiji enquired of Mr. Kelappan whether he had given sufficient notice to the Zamorin before undertaking the fast. Mr. Kelappan asserted that the question of giving notice did not arise, for in any society and at any time, a few reactionaries might always be found who would oppose any proposed social reform; the wounding of the sentiments and self-respect of thousands of members of the depressed classes through centuries was more real and more fundamental than that of the conscience of a few conservative Hindus. In his telegram sent to the Zamorin Gandhiji stated that Satyagraha is not intended to compel people but only to rouse their conscience; and he added that it would not be fair to compel Mr. Kelappan to give it up, one of the foremost social workers, as he was, in Kerala. Possibly what he could not achieve by fasting might be realised by his death; it was for the Zamorin to take all steps for saving his life.

The Zamorin was prepared however to permit a deputation of leaders to wait on him only after Mr. Kelappan would end his fast. Gandhiji now received a detailed letter from Mr. Kelappan explain

ing his position whereupon he consulted Pandit Malaviya and Mr. A. Ramaswamy Iyengar as regards any further action to be taken under the circumstances. He was getting a number of telegrams praying for his intervention in the matter. Gandhiji felt that the fast at Guruvayur was in imitation of his own and not due to any inner call of conscience; but Mr. Kelappan stated that he, on his part, had reached his decision before he was aware of Gandhiji's determination to fast and the latter event was more an occasion than a cause for his own fast. According to Gandhiji, Mr. Kelappan had committed two errors. In the first instance, he ought to have previously consulted Gandhiji, as an expert director in matters like fast, but he failed to do so; secondly, he should have given the Zamorin reasonable notice of his intention to go on fast. On 30 September, Gandhiji suggested that Mr. Kelappan should suspend the fast immediately. He must give notice to the temple authorities that after three months from the date of suspension he would be free to resume it, subject to Gandhiji's consent, in case the temple should continue to be inaccessible to the low castes. Meanwhile concentrated effort should be made to get the temple opened to the low castes within the specified period. If necessary, Pandit Malaviya would be sent to Malabar as soon as possible. Mr. Kelappan still felt that a sacrifice greater than Satyagraha (which had been going on for nearly eleven months) would be necessary to effect a change of heart in Malabar and that on his abandonment of the fast the momentum already gained would only lose its strength; but if Gandhiji were to insist that he should give up the fast he would certainly break it, throwing however the whole burden of responsibility on the great leader's shoulders. On 1 October Gandhiji replied repeating his advice that the fast should be broken and promising that he would take his own share of the burden.

Thus finally, in response to Gandhiji's repeated direction and advice, Mr. Kelappan broke his fast, taking orange juice at 8 a. m. on 2 October, 1932. He was removed to the Satyagraha *ashram* in a stretcher. He looked cheerful, though weak. The temple entry Satyagraha also was suspended.

A Brahmin youth, Mr. Krishna Bhatt, who had been fasting in front of the Zamorin's Palace at Tiruvachira also broke his fast on hearing of the developments at Guruvayur.

At a press conference held on 7 November in the Yerawada jail Gandhiji stated that the Guruvayur Temple came in his way unexpectedly. He found in Mr. Kelappan one of the great silent workers in India who, if he so wanted, could have reached the highest position in public life. But he chose to dedicate his life to the service of the depressed classes in society, before and after the Vaikom Satyagraha in course of which Gandhiji too had worked with him. Though

Mr. Kelappan was convinced that victory for him was at sight, he accepted Gandhiji's advice and broke his fast and thereby the victory itself. If after three months Mr. Kelappan were to be compelled to resume his fast, Gandhiji also, according to his promise, was bound to do so as otherwise he would not deserve to be called a servant of India or a friend of Mr. Kelappan. Gandhiji thought that temple entry was not a matter involving Mr. Kelappan's life and his own honour alone; for if no solution was found in the immediate future, the decision would never be effected for many generations to come.

Dr. Ambedkar was of the view that a mere fast on the part of Gandhiji would not solve the problem satisfactorily because temple entry was not connected with the social and economic regeneration of the untouchables. He wanted Gandhiji and the Congress to utilise the congenial atmosphere created at the moment to awaken public opinion in favour of getting employment and social equality for the members of the depressed classes. He deprecated the sacrifice of a precious life in the cause of an insignificant matter like temple entry.

After Mr. Kelappan's fast and the calling off of the temple entry Satyagraha it was decided to carry on a vigorous anti-untouchability campaign all over Kerala. Sixteen volunteers under Mr. A. K. Gopalan Nambiar proposed to start from Guruvayur and travel on foot from one to the other end of Kerala to do the necessary propaganda in favour of temple entry. Many local committees were formed and conferences held for this purpose.

In November, 1932, Gandhiji called upon the Zamorin not to slight the growing public opinion in the country, merely because of his prejudice towards a public worker like Mr. Kelappan. It was expected that the Zamorin would pursue the avenue of negotiation and settlement and remove all obstacles in the path of the desired reform. Early in December Rabindranath Tagore also reminded the Zamorin that it would be a permanent disgrace to all if the just principles of Hinduism could not be upheld. The Guruvayur Satyagraha was a test case, and the world would measure the Hindu sense of justice and duty by the extent of its success. The Zamorin should not shrink before the world's conscience, but open the temple, removing all obstacles legal or otherwise.

Towards the end of November, 1932 Gandhiji had decided that the temple entry question at Guruvayur should be settled by a referendum. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari and Mr. Karnad Sadasiva Rao met Messrs. K. Madhavan Nair and U. Gopala Menon at Calicut and planned to conduct a referendum in Ponani Taluk to ascertain the wishes of the adult *savarna* Hindus. Smt. Urmila Devi also came down to Malabar. Mr. K. Madhavan Nair was made the Director of the referendum.

to be assisted by Mr. U. Gopala Menon, President of the Kerala Anti-Untouchability Committee. Both of them devoted their whole attention to the referendum for a few weeks. The work was organised with village as the unit; and all the adult *savarnas* in the Taluk were to be requested to record their vote for or against the opening of the Guruvayur Temple to all the Hindus. denied admission hitherto, subject to the prescribed rules of worship. The Taluk was divided into two sections. Mr. K. A. Damodara Menon being put in charge of the northern section and Mr. A. C. Raman in charge of the southern one. The work was started on 3 December, 1932, Mr. A. V. Thakkar, Secretary, All-India Untouchability League, arrived in Malabar. Smt. Urmila Devi, Kasturba Gandhi Mrs. Lakshmidas, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari,¹² Mr. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai and Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma addressed many meetings in the Taluk. Several devoted workers went on foot and visited houses to assess the public opinion. Nearly 77% of those who registered their vote was in favour of temple entry. The report¹³ of the referendum was submitted to Gandhiji in jail by Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, Mr. Kelappan and Mr. K. Madhavan Nair on 29 December, 1932. An appeal also was made to him not to resort to a fast on account of the Guruvayur Temple as Dr. Subbaroyan had given notice of a Bill in connection with it, to be moved in the Madras Legislative Council.

Meanwhile the *sanatanists* were enraged and very much upset over the wide popularity gained by Mr. Kelappan's fast, the personal interest evinced by Gandhiji in it and the positive results of the referendum. The *sanatanist* leaders of Tamil Nad and Northern India hurried to Kerala and appealed to the Zamorin to stick to his guns. They appealed to the sentiments of the orthodox Hindus and held a conference¹⁴ at Guruvayur on 29 December, 1932. But it was significant

12. Mr. Rajagopalachari handed over charge as President of the Congress to Babu Rajendra Prasad in order to be able to concentrate attention on temple entry propaganda in Kerala.

13. In 1932 Ponnani Taluk contained seven *firkas* and 123 *amsoms*. There were 3,24,500 Hindus and the number of those entitled to temple entry was 65,000. The volunteers visited 8,141 houses of *savarnas* (out of 8,416) in the Taluk. 27,465 persons including women were approached. 7,302 persons refused to vote and 20,163 persons recorded their opinion. Of them, 15,568 persons were in favour of temple entry (77%). 2,579 persons were against it (13%). A few remained neutral (10%). Nearly 8,000 women voted in favour of temple entry.

14. Sri Sankaracharya of Puri, Mr. V. V. Srinivasa Iyengar, Goswami Gokulnath, Panchanan Tarkaratna of Bengal and the *Madhadhipathi* of Udupi, among others, attended the Conference.

that almost all the *pandits* of Kerala kept themselves aloof for they had realised that it would be impossible to stem the tide of progressive public opinion in Malabar. The Sanatanist Conference congratulated the Zamorin, though not present at the function, on his bold stand and conferred the title of *Dharma Dhira Mahavira* on him. But the Conference had little effect on the public opinion in Kerala.

On 8 January, 1933 Guruvayur Day was celebrated throughout Kerala in support of Dr. Subbarayan's proposed Bill on temple entry. The celebration was an eye-opener to the orthodox section of the people.

CHAPTER 24

BATTLE FOR CIVIL LIBERTY IN TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN

We may now leave aside the developments in Malabar for a while and dwell upon one of the greatest acts of social reform in Kerala with reference to Hindu society, namely, the opening of temples to the depressed classes who had been excluded from them by age-long custom. But before dealing with the event itself, it is essential to trace, in this chapter, the different stages in the struggle for the recognition of civil liberty in Travancore and Cochin.

(1) *Travancore*

As early as 1870 the Government of Travancore had begun to concern itself with the disabilities of the unprivileged classes, with special reference to the access of the low castes to the courts of law in the State either as parties or as witnesses. The Dewan, Sir F. Madhava Rao, addressed a letter to the Sadr Court to take proper steps for obviating their inconvenience. At places like Trivandrum where free approach was possible they should have unhampered access without any distinction; the lower courts might be instructed to act upto this principle. Of course the low castes could not have access to the court houses situated close to temples without raising serious objection but such institutions might be moved to buildings less objectionably situated.

A copy of this letter was sent to the British Resident, Mr. L. J. Minchin who urged that every effort should be made "to ensure due obedience on the part of the subordinate officers of the State to the liberal instructions" issued by the Dewan. He also added that "where access to a court is denied to any class of the people that class in effect are debarred from obtaining justice, the right of all in a free State."

It would appear that in 1869 certain Brahmins of Punjalingapuram in South Travancore had assaulted Rev. W. Lee, a Missionary of the London Society.¹ There was also another incident when the Sudras of Vanur, a village not far from Punjalingapuram, insulted and threatened to assault the girls of the Mission School for having

1. Letter No. 1357 dated 16-4-1870 from the Dewan to the Resident.
2. The Resident's reply to the Dewan dated 20 April, 1870.
3. Madras G. O. No. 284 dated 11 September, 1869.

passed by a particular way. Suitable punishments were given in both cases, as the principle had to be endorsed that the "public highways were really public property."¹ The Dewan informed the Resident that he was determined "to introduce and advance right principles of public policy, steadily, yet discreetly" and that he had erred, if at all, rather on the "side of the liberal tendencies of the age than on that of the conservatism of the country."²

The low castes in Travancore were subjected to a number of disabilities at the time. Several restrictions³ were placed on their personal liberty. Many of them had been ended either by notification or by being allowed to fall into disuse. Sir T. Madhava Rao had done a lot much against prejudiced opposition to render their worst features

4. Resident's Letter to Acting Chief Secretary, Government of Madras, dated 9 March, 1870.
5. Resident's Letter to Acting Chief Secretary, Government of Madras, dated 9 March, 1870.
6. Extract from the Dewan's letter quoted by the Resident. See the Resident's letter dated 20 April, 1870. "They had to guard the Sircar Properties in several places. They were compelled to work in the Sircar forests in cutting down or transporting timber. They had to carry Sircar things from place to place. They were largely impressed to convey Sircar salt from the pans to the places of export. They had to supply firewood to certain charitable institutions and so on. Families.....were even allotted to certain private individuals who were at liberty to obtain gratuitous services from such families."
7. "A proportion of the low castes were indeed subjected to avowed slavery. As such they were attached to lands like chattels and were bought and sold. Their masters were authorised themselves to punish them for refractory conduct, a power which it may be imagined, was frequently abused in no small degree. Even those that were not avowed slaves used to be treated almost as such. They were not at liberty to keep milch cows. They could not use oil mills. They were interdicted from carrying on trade as bazaar men. They were debarred the use of any but coarse clothes. It was improper in them to wear any but the most ordinary personal ornaments, whether for males or females. It was not open to them to decorate the sheds they erected on marriage occasions. They were restricted to particular music. They were denied permission to move in conveyances. They could not even wear shoes or use umbrellas. It was considered improper to allow them to use metallic utensils. They could not build substantial or tiled houses. Nor could they acquire landed property with impunity." (Dewan's letter).

a matter of history. Yet a few of the disabilities continued to persist.⁸

The Resident was firmly of the view that one should not be satisfied with the expression of liberal generalities in so far as the standard of achievement was so low that an adverse current of prejudice might arrest progress altogether and might also express itself from time to time in various ways. His analysis of the situation indicated that the existing disabilities of the low castes were with special reference to their use of roads open to the higher castes, their approach within a certain distance of many courts and public offices, and their exclusion from Government Schools and public services. These specific disabilities were based primarily on the idea of *theendal* or pollution.

The prohibited roads were some times not mere bye-paths but sections of direct main lines passing within the prescribed distance of some temple or high-caste feeding establishment or dwelling-house. The prohibition of entrance to the courts of justice and public offices was certainly a "positive denial of justice in many individual cases", as it was impossible in such circumstances to prevent oppression and corruption on the part of the some of the underlings." Strange it was that a large portion of the community who contributed their quota to the State revenues from which the schools were mainly supported were debarred from attending them. At the capital, Trivandrum itself the spirit of exclusion was strong¹⁰ and in the country

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8. "Some streets in towns and villages are not yet open to them. So are a few public office buildings. They are still excluded from many public schools and public employments. Even these disabilities do not press upon them as heavily as may at first sight appear. The streets to which they are denied admittance.....are fewer now than before..... To public office they have in most instances sufficient access to make their complaints known..... One or two schools belonging to the Sircar have been thrown open as an experiment to even the lowest castes..... As for throwing public employment open to all alike, far greater difficulties.....are likely to be encountered..... But the progress of knowledge in the country in general may be expected to prepare the way for amelioration even in this respect." (Dewan's Letter).
 9. If a low-caste man happened to be a witness, he could not come to the court but the court must go to him, not too near him in any case. So his evidence was taken by a *Gumastha* deputed for the purpose with the aid of an intermediate peon; owing to the distance neither the question nor the reply would be audible or intelligible.
 10. In the High School at Trivandrum, theoretically all castes were admitted but practically the Pulayas were interdicted from approaching within a considerable distance of the High School site.

towns and rural parts the prejudices were indeed stronger so much so that even theoretically an Ezhava would not be admitted into a Government School, much less of the yet lower castes. In the matter of official appointments a strong popular feeling prevailed that "if a low caste man was admitted to a position of authority, high caste men would, on occasions, have to stand before him" - a situation repugnant to high caste feeling. The mass of the public services contained little reasonable proportion of Syrian and other Christian elements.

The Resident was of the view that the amelioration of the conditions was indeed a difficult problem so far as some of the obstacles were deliberately created by interested parties to impede social progress; a determined Government could easily overcome them by adopting strong measures. The State administration was in a dilemma. It could not merely rest content with the expression of general principles; on the other hand precise rules had to be issued lest the injudicious action of any subordinate officer should create ill-feeling between class and class.

The Resident suggested that in the first instance, all roads on which Government money was spent should be opened to all castes; in case of insuperable objections, a convenient lane should be newly opened so that all classes might make use of an uninterrupted highway. Roads constituting the main approaches to the courts and public offices ought to be declared free to all. Secondly, public servants in public capacity must lay aside all scruples regarding pollution and permit all classes of people to approach them for the performance of business whenever the exigency of public service demanded it. Thirdly according to the Resident, the establishment of separate schools for the low caste pupils would be a retrograde measure tending to sanction and ratify the righteousness of the caste feeling. Fourthly, as regards the employment in the public services, the difficulty was that temple and *Ootupuras* or Government feeding houses intended for the Brahmin community constituted an important subject in State administration. There was actually no need for a Tahsildar to administer temple funds and supervise the feeding houses, apart from his normal duties as a Revenue Officer and Police Magistrate. It was such combination of functions that often deprived the low castes of their legitimate rights. There was a separate establishment at the headquarters for the management of *Devaswom* and *Ootupuras* in Travancore and, according to the Resident, there was no good reason why such separate establishments should not be organised, under the Head Office, in the Districts as well. Such a step would make the revenue, magisterial and police officers free to attend to their normal work and enable all classes of society to assume the responsibilities of administration.

The Government of Madras passed an order in support of the Resident's valuable suggestions, applicable equally to Travancore and Cochin.¹¹

The next stage in the evolution of civil rights was marked by the submission of memorials for their recognition in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The agitation for equal civil rights for all was a decisive event in the freedom struggle in Travancore.

Subsequently the particular objective of the *avarnas* was to get the right of holding office in the Devaswom and Palace Departments and of access to all buildings maintained out of public funds. They wanted the eradication of untouchability and unapproachability, the elimination of all religious and social differences which undermined the dignity of man and were revolting to his self-respect. There was to be no distinction on the ground of birth or religious prejudice in regard to access to the temples in the State. Every Hindu must be able to serve the Government in all Departments, and every Christian, Muslim or *avarna* should get entry into those Departments (like the Revenue Department, for instance) which were exclusively monopolised by the high caste Hindus at the time. In other words the leaders were advocating the recognition of social and political rights.

Mr. T. K. Madhavan who thought in terms of all those who groaned under social injustice was of the view that the new demand, based on truth and justice, would in no way endanger the cause of Hinduism. The Civic Rights League with branches all over the State was formed with the avowed object of securing recognition of the fundamental rights of nearly 26 lakhs of people who had been denied the same for centuries. Mr. Madhavan launched an organised propaganda to disseminate the ideals of the League. A Civic Rights Conference was held at Trivandrum on 2 March, 1918 when Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai and other leaders blessed the movement. Mass meetings were held at other places¹² in the State and declamations made asserting the right of under-represented communities to secure admission to the higher ranks in all Departments including the Land Revenue Department.

11. Order dated 23 April, 1870, No. 143.

12. In January and February, 1919 several meetings were held at Alleppey, Omallur, Moovattupuzha, Vaikom, Munambam, Kannamangalam, Nilamperur, Kartikapally and Ayirur.

On 21 February, 1919 the Popular Assembly took up the problem for discussion. The Dewan stated:¹³

"There is no use in attacking the constitution of a State without trying to understand its character, here, there and everywhere..... The subjects of a State should take its constitution as they find it. It is of course open to them to make suggestions in the way of improvement and as long as these do not transgress the fundamental rules of the constitution they are entitled to be duly considered. The separation of Devaswoms is neither desirable in principle nor feasible in the circumstances of the State. Any reform that is proposed must be consistent with the essential features of the constitution under which the Sovereign administers this State as an agent of the Deity."

According to the Dewan, the Ruler being *Padmanabhadasa* could not divert himself of the management of Devaswom. With the growing demands on the finances of the State it was not possible to constitute a separate Department for the administration of the Devaswom which by tradition had been part of the Revenue Department. As regards the claims of the Christians for appointment in the Revenue Department, the Dewan stated that they could hardly be considered as suffering from any particular hardship.¹⁴ He assured that appointments would be made purely on merit and not with reference to caste, creed or colour and that no particular class would be excluded merely because it was foremost in education or exempted merely because it was backward in this respect. He added that, other things being equal, preference would be given to such as deserved special encouragement.

On 1 March, 1919 Mr. K. C. Mammen Mappillay presented a memorial to the Dewan stating that the "Land Revenue Department is the backbone of administration and as long as the members of the communities whom we represent in this Assembly do not secure admission to the higher ranks of the Department we feel we are labouring under a real disability". Whatever might have been the reasons for the origin and practice of exclusion, it would be an enlightened step to sympathise with the aspirations of the excluded communities and enable them to cherish their desire.

On 20 March, a Working Committee of the Civic Rights League was formed with Mr. John Chandy as President. Next month a

13. Dewan's statement, in the third session of the Assembly.

14. The Dewan said that only 39 out of 950 appointments in the entire public service on Rs. 30 and above were closed to the Ezhavas and others, viz., those of 31 Tahsildars, 4 Division Assistants and 4 Dewan Peishkars.

public meeting presided over by Mr. E. J. John was held at Kottayam when the various disabilities were set forth in clear terms.¹⁵

In sober language Mr. E. J. John pointed out that only twenty per cent of the citizens enjoyed true civic rights in Travancore at the time, an injustice ascribable to purely social and religious considerations. He appealed to the head and heart of the fortunate and privileged classes to help all victims of social injustice, because a system that confines hundreds to hereditary servitude "cannot be right in principle." But the exclusion of certain classes from certain Departments, especially the Revenue Department, was a disability that the Government should and could remove. It was not fair that Christians and Muslims should be so excluded on the basis of religion and Ezhavas on that of caste. It was a Christian who during his Dewanship, had placed the Devaswom under the Revenue Department for its better management and controlled it as well. Yet no catastrophe had occurred. When the whole State was dedicated to *Sri Padmanabha Swamy* the object obviously could not have been to deprive a large section of loyal subjects of their civic rights. It was not right to argue that certain classes who could not be admitted into the Revenue Department could yet be absorbed in other Departments like Public Works or Education Departments which incurred much expenditure of the revenues of the State. The agitation was not for appointment to a few posts under the Government but against the invidious distinction drawn between man and man in the State. The closing of the Revenue Department to a few sections of the population really implied their exclusion from the higher cadres of posts in the State including Dewanship in so far as their incumbents were generally chosen from the Revenue Department. The separation of the Devaswom from the Revenue Department was the only feasible solution to which end sustained agitation might be necessary.¹⁶

On the initiative of Mr. Madhavan, it was resolved to submit a public memorial to the Government regarding the recognition of civic rights. A deputation led by Mr. E. J. John waited on the Dewan, Mr. M. Krishnan Nair, and presented to him a memorial referring to the exclusion of the law-abiding Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims not only from the Revenue Department but even from the Pangode Imperial Service Brigade and Government Students' Hostel

15. No. 53/Pol/1919. English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum.

16. While the Dewan, Mr. V. P. Madhava Rao, had shut his eyes from the issue, his successor, Mr. Rajagopalachari, recognised its existence and the next Dewan, Mr. M. Krishnan Nair, promised its consideration. In fact Mr. Rajagopalachari had even suggested the starting of constitutional agitation for gaining the end.

where no plea of vested interests was possible.¹⁷ This was a "predicament that no self-respecting citizen can bear with equanimity in this progressive age." Such exclusion, the deputationists warned, would affect the efficiency of the service in the absence of sufficient competition and create ill feeling among the different communities. Any attempt to justify inequality on the basis of tradition was bound to be futile and its continuance was inconsistent with the assurance given by the Dewan himself in the thirteenth and fourteenth sessions of the Shri Mulam Popular Assembly. The memorial called upon the Government to give effect to the noble sentiments expressed in Queen Victoria's Proclamation regarding the free admission to offices, of all citizens with education, ability and integrity. The Government must throw open the ranks in every Department of public service to all subjects, extend the benefit of public institutions equally to all communities and remove the stigma of untouchability.

This was a memorial to get the civic rights recognised, of nearly twenty-six lakhs of people out of a total population of thirty-four lakhs and it reflected the intensity of public feeling on a vital issue. It was not a request for the favour of appointments but a demand for the recognition of the elementary right to equality of opportunity. The satisfaction of the demand was most essential for communal harmony to which an authoritative and public assurance from the Government would have contributed much.

The Dewan stated in his reply that Government Hostels and *Satrams* would be thrown open to all classes "as far as possible" and that this "policy will be pursued and given effect to except in very unavoidable cases." But the Government was helpless in regard to the question of untouchability as the deciding factors were "time, education and social improvement." The Dewan added that the Government was considering the issue of separating Devaswom from Land Revenue Department.

The Dewan's reply naturally failed to satisfy the deputationists who decided to carry on the agitation. Under its pressure the Government appointed Mr. Krishna Iyengar, Forest Settlement Officer, to submit a report on the issue of the separation of the Devaswom from the Revenue Department.

According to Mr. Krishna Iyengar¹⁸ there were 1069 Devaswoms within Travancore State, lying scattered in all Taluks except Devikulam. He favoured the separation, from the Land Revenue Department, of all Government-owned Devaswoms as well as private ones

17. No. 53/Pol/1919, English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum.

18. Letter from Krishna Iyengar to R. Mahadeva Iyer, Chief Secretary, dated 3-7-1919.

under Government management including charitable institutions and their organisation as a separate Devaswom Department under a Devaswom Dewan Peishkar as in Cochin, in direct correspondence with the Government. For this purpose the State could be divided into three regions, Northern, Central and Southern.

As Mr. Rama Iyengar had observed in his Revenue Settlement Memorandum,¹⁹ about 1,549 temples and 45 feeding houses were under the control of the Tahsildars at the time. On account of lack of supervision, gross abuses prevailed in their management. The Tahsildars and the Peishkars above them were to be relieved of their charge and an energetic officer appointed to visit and control the different Devaswoms, correct the abuses and regulate and audit their expenditure. Mr. Ramachandra Rao, an officer deputed to make a special study of the Devaswoms, also testified to the fact that waste and misappropriation were only too common. He added: "The popular attitude towards these institutions which is now marked by coldness and suspicion deserves to be converted into one of sympathy and genuine interest making for their well-being."²⁰ A separate Devaswom Department would disclose avenues for economy and serve to make the practices uniform in all institutions and ultimately prove beneficial to both Devaswom and Revenue Departments.²¹ It would be conducive to the free entertainment of men in the Land Revenue Department, irrespective of caste or religion.

In April, 1920 the Government appointed, on the basis of Mr. Krishna Iyengar's recommendations, a mixed Committee of Hindus and Non-Hindus to report on the feasibility of separating the Devaswom from the Land Revenue Department and the financial implications of such a change.²² The Committee suggested that the strength of the Revenue Department could be reduced and economy effected on the institution of the Devaswom Department. The

19. No. D. Dis. 1078/45. C. S. English Records, Trivandrum.

20. No. D. Dis. 1078/45. C. S.

21. The Devaswom revenues came to about 4½ lakhs of rupees. They had been amalgamated with State revenues and tenures of Devaswom properties were changed, into *Pandarapattom* while in Cochin the Devaswom revenue were kept separate and realised in kind and cash. It was difficult in Travancore to procure the revenues in case of default on the part of the contractors. Mr. Krishna Iyengar wanted the State to maintain properly the several spiritual institutions at any cost, irrespective of the revenues of such institutions. The Government could supplement the Devaswom revenue from the general revenues of the State for the efficient maintenance of the Devaswoms.

22. Press Communiqué on the Devaswom Proclamation of 1922.

Committee was unanimously of the view that Col. Munro had not confiscated the different Devaswoms to the Government but only attempted to manage and maintain them efficiently for all time to come. But while a majority in the Committee held that the State being sovereign proprietor was legally accountable to none for their administration the dissenting member was of the view that the assumption extended only to management, the State being a trustee of the Devaswoms; as the State mixed up the trust property with its own, the expenditure in connection with the Devaswoms, however large, was a legitimate charge on its general revenues. The Government took legal opinion in the matter and came to the conclusion that Col. Munro's assumption which did not amount to confiscation was in exercise of the traditional right of *Melkoima* inherent in the Hindu sovereigns of the State. The Government was obliged to maintain the Devaswoms efficiently in so far as the income from their property, if kept separate, would have been sufficient to meet the expenditure connected with them. The Government felt that the creation of a Devaswom Department was absolutely necessary.

Lord Willington, Governor of Madras, on his visit to Travancore, appealed to the State Government to consider the request made by the unprivileged classes sympathetically. Finally on 12 April, 1922 the Maharaja issued a Proclamation²³ separating the Devaswom from the Revenue Department and creating the Devaswom Department for the better management of temples and their property.

The Proclamation recalled the fact that at the time of Col. Munro's assumption, the immovable property alone of the Devaswoms amounted to 1580491 *Parahs* (measures) of paddy and Rs 53092 in cash which came to be absorbed in the general revenues of the State and that a large portion of immovable property became *Pandaravaka* lands and as such incapable of identification and separation.²⁴ The

23. Devaswom Hand Book, Section I.

24. Prior to the days of Col. Munro, the temples were under the private administration of *Ooralars* whose mismanagement urged him to assume them in 1811-12. His order did not enumerate the Devaswoms the management of which was assumed by the Government. But in the case of some of them subsequently assumed, separate accounts of assets and expenditure were kept and as such they were institutions financially autonomous. The income and expenditure of a majority however were merged with those of the State. In July, 1905 Mr. Chempakaraman Pillai and Mr. N. Rajaram Rao were deputed to report on the regulation of their expenditure as regards *Pathious* and purificatory ceremonies. Later in May 1907, Mr. M. K. Ramachandra Rao, Puisne Judge of the High Court, was asked to make a detailed investigation of the

Government would, out of the Devaswom funds, maintain the temple buildings and appurtenances and administer the Devaswoms in accordance with custom. The Devaswom fund would include the allotment made in the annual State budget, money realised through the sale of movable property, voluntary contributions from the devotees, interest on investments and other incomes received by the Devaswoms. Their immovable property would in future be dealt with as *Pandaravaka* lands and the expenditure in connection with the Devaswom Department met out of the general revenues of the state. It was for the Government to define the powers and duties of the officers of the new department and make rules for carrying out the purpose of the Proclamation.

This Proclamation called the Devaswom Proclamation was to come into force from 3 September 1922.

The Government expressed the hope that the Proclamation would confer benefits on a large section of the people by removing the disabilities under which they had been labouring as regards entry into the Revenue Department.²⁵ The Proclamation was the successful climax of a struggle that had been going on for at least half a century. While it was a resting place, it was yet a fresh starting point.

(2) *Cochin*

The low castes in Hindu society continued to suffer from their helpful attitude to them. Particular attention was bestowed on

Devaswom affairs. The Government order, passed on his report, contemplated the separation of Devaswom lands and revenues from *Pandaravaka* lands and general revenues. But at that time it was felt that Devaswom land settlement should not be disturbed except after the settlement period was over. (Press Communique on the Devaswom Proclamation, dated 12 April, 1922).

25. It was pointed out that in spite of the Proclamation its intention was not carried out in a way satisfactory to the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus even at the close of the year 1922. The *Malayala Manorama*, dated 14 December, 1922, gave the following figures:

Officers	Those with pay	Those with pay	Those with pay	Total
	upto Rs 20	ranging from Rs 20 to 50	above Rs 50	
Caste Hindus	3325	388	104	3817
Non-Caste Hindus and non-Hindus	99	37	11	147

the Pariahs and the Pulayas. The former were permitted to take freely from the Government forests, raw materials that they required in their hereditary occupations. Steps were taken to teach them improved methods of manufacture. Special schools for the Pulaya children were opened where they were provided with clothing as well as mid-day meal on all working days.

Formerly the members of the low castes used to be excluded from the public schools in Cochin. This restriction was however removed as regards the Anglo-Vernacular Schools. But even in the latter part of the nineteenth century the Vernacular Schools as well as the only Sanskrit School in the State were open only to the high-caste boys. As early as 1877 the Government recognised the need to permit the free use of public roads by all without distinction of caste or creed. The British Government had laid down that the high streets of all towns would constitute the property of the whole community. The Government of Cochin however felt that the adoption of this principle laid down with reference to the state of society on the east coast, would be unpopular in the State as there was a "well understood scale of distances within which persons of different castes may not approach each other without one of them polluting the other"^{25a} The Government was prepared to declare the main approaches to the courts and public offices free to all and also ensure the accessibility to such institutions to the low castes for the performance of public business during working hours. The Government of Cochin however did not consider it advisable in 1871 to throw open the Revenue and Magisterial offices to all classes so far as such officers supervised the management of the Devaswom and the feeding houses in the State. In 1918 there were complaints²⁶ of ill-treatment of some low caste people by the high caste Hindus during the Trichur Pooram festival. A Special Committee²⁷ instituted an enquiry into the incidents and submitted a report to the Government on 2 September, 1918. They were of the view that on occasions of temple processions along the roads, the low caste people should be permitted to remain on the verandahs of

25a. Dewan Sankunni Menon's letter to the Resident, 24 January, 1871, No. 60.

26. The petitioners who were high-caste residents of Kurkanchery, Chiyaram and Kanimangalam anticipated trouble when the temple procession was taken out. But everything passed off quietly. The complaint of the low castes was that those among them who were standing at the time on the verandahs of their own houses on the roadside were compelled by the police to enter the inner apartments. There were other complaints also, based upon social prejudices but they lacked substance.

27. The Committee consisted of the Dewan Peishkar, the Superintendent of Police, the District Magistrate and the Superintendents of the Devaswoms.

private houses and shops situated within the limits of private lands on either side of the road. It was enough, they said, that such people were not "allowed to remain on the road-side margins and also within a distance of fifty yards on the road proper both on the front and rear of the deity when the procession passes."²⁸ Such an arrangement was not expected to cause serious inconvenience to the public using the road as the procession would take only three or four minutes to cover a distance of one hundred yards. "Social conditions" said the Committee "are changing day by day and the state of society is not now exactly what it was a quarter of a century ago. With the spread of education a feeling of self-importance and self-respect has begun to manifest itself and it would be rather incongruous at the present time to enforce the old conservative prejudice of the caste Hindus of the country."²⁹

The Dewan of Cochin was in general agreement with the Report of the Committee but doubted whether any member of the low castes could be prohibited from using the public road-margins for any religious purpose.³⁰ He decided that any such prohibition should be notified, if necessary, by the Magistrate in charge of the maintenance of peace, on intimation from the Devaswom Superintendent or private parties.

In 1920 there were baseless rumours that the Government had permitted the low castes to enter the temples in Tripunitura and elsewhere,³¹ but they soon died out after a warning administered by the Government.

The Vaikom Satyagraha in Travancore for getting the roads around the local temple opened to all became, as we noted earlier, an all-India issue and produced far-reaching results. The next demand was to get the temples themselves opened. When Mr. K. Kelappan undertook a fast unto death at the temple gate at Guruvayur, the Maharaja of Cochin received a number of memorials and telegrams from all parts of India, including one from Gandhiji who requested:

"Life one of Kerala's great servants Kelappan hanging in balance for opening Guruvayoor seeing that unexampled wave of awakening passing throughout land favour opening all temples will you not exert your great influence securing opening

28. Report dated 2 September 1918.

29. *Ibid.*

30. G. O. dated 21 January 1919. G. No. 651/93.

31. Press Communique dated 29 May 1920.



Guruvayoor and if possible other temples you know perhaps that Kelappan has been fasting since twentieth for opening temples."

The Maharaja felt that the temple entry question was the thin end of a project, not only of constitutional but also of socio-religious importance, going to the "very root of the Hindu Constitution itself."³²

The Government of Cochin considered to what extent the State would be justified in throwing open, by an Act of the Legislature, the temples within the State to all members of the Hindu community. It was a generally accepted view that the temples "are places of public worship founded and endowed by individuals or communities and managed by *Urallars* or hereditary trustees, directly or through *Samudayams* or Managers whose office was sometimes personal but oftener hereditary."³³ The Rajas used to exercise sovereign jurisdiction over these institutions but little interfered with their management; the temples in Cochin, as elsewhere on the Malabar coast, were autonomous and independent of control from outside. According to Mr. K. Achutha Menon, the legal Expert, the State had to assume,

32. D. O. to the Dewan dated 7 October 1932. It was stated that the temple proper has three parts (a) the portion within the outer walls (b) the inner apartments and (c) the *Sanctum Sanctorum*. According to custom all classes of Hindus were allowed worship but the difference lay in the degree of approach. The Maharaja felt that it was neither advisable nor expedient to express an opinion on the matter without consulting all the interested parties. The view taken by the Government of Travancore was that they had no authority or privilege over the Guruvayur temple and that the Maharaja's approval was not necessary for the opening of that temple to the low castes.

33. Cochin State Manual, Page 324. According to Mr. A. Ghosh, the institutions might be traced to the "gifts made at the altar in connection with the sacrificial ceremonies prescribed by Hindu sacred books as the pre-requisite for attaining bliss." (K. Achutha Menon's D. O. dated 6 November 1932). According to Mr. Justice Sundara Iyer the temples in Kerala would come under four categories; ancient temples founded by Parasurama, and those founded by the Rajas, by the village communities and by individuals. (Malabar Law) Wigram refers to a distinctive class of temples founded by devotees from alms received. According to Mr. Conolly, Collector of Malabar, the temples of Malabar were either the property of some influential family or were "claimed and managed by a body of trustees who derive their rights from immemorial inheritance and who conduct the affairs of the temple under the patronage and superintendence of some Rajah or other person of consideration."

some time after 1762, the direct management of a few of the temples which came to be known as incorporated Devaswoms; others, assumed subsequently, were kept as unincorporated devaswoms; in 1909 both the categories were amalgated and constituted into a separate endowment, "the several devaswoms being thus made component and inter-dependent parts of a whole instead of being the isolated units" that they were. Such State-administered devaswoms represented only a fraction of the temples in the State, for there were many others owned by individuals or groups, over which the Government of course had powers of superintendence and even of interference in case of proved mismanagement. Yet the Government's interference, according to the Legal Expert,³⁴ should not be prejudicial "to the vested rights of the beneficiaries of the trust. The faithful and honest fulfilment of the benevolent intentions of the original donors is a sacred duty as much with the original owners as with the Government who has assumed management." Legislation on controversial subjects should be based on justifiable necessity, never going beyond its demands. In any case, the State, the supreme trustee, must carry out the requirements of the trust. "There is very high authority" said the Legal Expert "in favour of the view that uninterrupted and undisputed enjoyment for a long period of time constitute sufficient *prima facie* evidence of absolute dedication even in the absence of proof of the origin of the grant; proof of long and uninterrupted usage will suffice to establish a prescriptive right."³⁵ Every institution would gather, as a separate entity, a host of traditions and customs but the advocates of legislative interference would not usually "take into account the universally recognised right on the part of the founder to see that the institution fulfils the design of its creation." It might be claimed in regard to some of the religious or charitable institutions that their beneficial interest would vest in the trustees and it could be equally suggested on eminent authority that "the community itself for whose spiritual benefit the institution was founded and endowed" should be regarded as a "corporate body, forming the juristic person in whom the properties are vested and who act through one or more of the natural persons forming the corporate body, these latter being the *Dharmakartas* or Panchayats charged with the execution of the trusts of the institution."³⁶ In either case legally the Manager of a temple was the administrator of the property attached to it as regards which he was in the position of a trustee.

34. K. Achutha Menon's D. O. dated 6 November, 1932.

35. *Ibid.*

36. 20, Madras 288 at Page 289.

Thus on the whole, the legal advice given to the Government of Cochin was that the State should hesitate to embark on revolutionary legislation amounting to a virtual confiscation of the rights of the beneficiaries and exclude sentiments from the sphere of reasonable ideas and actions. Legislative interference with existing usage was a step to be taken only when there was cogent and convincing evidence that the nature of the foundation, the interests of the institution, the privileges of the trustees and the vested rights, if any, of the worshippers would permit the same. Several practical difficulties also were pointed out in regard to the implementation of such legislation.¹⁷

Meanwhile several resolutions were sent up for discussion in the Cochin Legislative Council.¹⁸ But the President disallowed them.

37. In the first instance the rights of those who performed service in the temple were in several cases hereditary and secured by the grant of temple property. Legislation compelling them to work under conditions not contemplated at the time of the original grant might lead to prolonged litigation. Secondly any legislation uprooting the well-established rights would bring the internal arrangements in the temple to a stand-still. Thirdly there were temples maintained out of the general funds of a village or *nadu* or *desom*, and it was difficult to see how a change in the spirit of the times could justify an enforced change in the constitution of those endowments through legislative enactment. Fourthly complications were likely to arise when the habits and customs of those seeking temple entry would come into conflict with those on which the ritualistic observances were based. Fifthly there were institutions used by particular sects in the Hindu Community and any legislation regarding them would be inexpedient. Again such legislation might be contested and an injunction granted to restrain State Officers from executing constitutional statutes where the complainants could show a proper interest. (Osborne V. Bank, Harward Law Review, p. 225). Thus the State should step in and legislate only where the beneficiaries, as a class, would desire the contemplated changes.

38. Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar's resolution demanded the throwing open to the non-caste Hindus, of roads, schools, wells, tanks and temples maintained or subsidised by the Government and accessible to the caste Hindus. Mr. K. Ayyappan wanted a Proclamation abolishing untouchability and unapproachability in the State. Another resolution of Mr. Warriar demanded the constitution of a committee to report on the strength of public feeling against the social and religious disabilities of certain classes. Mr. M K Raman wanted that on the background of the Poona settlement among the leaders of the various communities there should be legislation to remove the disabilities, but Regulations should be made to maintain orderliness and cleanliness in the temples. He also wanted that the Harijans should be placed on an equal footing with the caste Hindus and given equal privileges and freedom in the worship of God and the use of public tanks and wells.

In November, 1932 the Government of Travancore constituted a³⁹ Committee to report on the question of temple entry. Mr. Austin, Dewan of Travancore, met Mr. Herbert, Dewan of Cochin, and requested the latter to cooperate⁴⁰ in the work of the Committee. But the desire of the Government of Cochin was "to leave the matter alone and watch the situation quietly." No reply was therefore sent to Gandhiji's telegram referred to earlier. The Government also considered it inopportune to ascertain the opinion of the *Vydeckas* and *Pandits* on the temple entry issue so far as the "cantankerous youths" in their families might be influenced by "the hot heads" among the agitators to give "undesirable opinion" and thereby attract undue public attention. The Dewan of Cochin thought that "the agitation for temple entry is slowly losing ground and the counter-move against it by the orthodox party is gaining grounds."⁴¹

39. G. O. dated 25 November 1932.

40. Cochin Dewan's D. O. to the Maharaja dated 22 December, 1932.

41. Cochin Dewan's letter to the Travancore Dewan dated 16 January, 1933.

CHAPTER 25

TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION

The agitation for temple entry was conducted, it is said, not so much by the *avarnas* as by their *savarna* sympathisers. Of course the most important circumstance that contributed to the great change in the mentality of a large number of *savarnas* was the impact of Western ideas and education. The educated citizens of India who demanded political equality with their imperialist masters, could not shut their eyes to the problem of social inequality in their own land. Foreign travellers and others in the past had been particularly struck by the phenomenon of *theendal* or unapproachability. Indians had to set their own house in order before pointing an accusing finger at the disabilities from which several classes of people in other countries suffered. One progressive step taken to solve the problem of social equality was to secure elementary civil rights for the depressed classes. In Kerala they came to be accorded access, as we noted, to the public roads, markets, courts, schools and offices. Step by step, they were made conscious of their various disabilities so much so that they began to aspire for full equal status with the higher classes with whom they got more opportunities to mingle.

The movement for temple entry was started in Travancore before it was thought of in British India. Mr. C. Raman Tampi who had retired as Judge of the Travancore High Court "was the first individual in Travancore to ask for opening of all State temples to the *avarnas* at a public meeting held in Quilon in 1917.¹" As early as 1919, at the fifteenth session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, the late Mr. T. K. Madhavan, then Editor of the Malayalam weekly, *Desabhimani*, made a representation to the Government for the admission of *avarnas* into *savarna* temples. The Government refused to interfere on the plea of religious neutrality. At the next session of the Assembly in 1920, Mr. Kunju Paricker pleaded for the recognition of the right of the Ezhavas to enter all Hindu temples

1. Mahadev Desai, *the Epic of Travancore*, Page 10.

for worship. But the Government did nothing, apart from noting the proposition. Again at the seventeenth session of the Assembly in 1921 Mr. T. K. Madhavan raised the same question but the Dewan gave the ruling that a religious subject should not be discussed in the House.²

As stated elsewhere, in 1923 at the Congress session at Kakinada the Kerala Anti-Untouchability Committee was constituted for the uplift of the depressed classes. This naturally gave an impetus to the reform movement in Travancore. Next year the leaders resolved that the depressed classes should be enabled to walk along the roads around the Vaikom Temple. As a result of the famous Satyagraha at Vaikom that continued for nearly one year the roads on three sides of the temple were thrown open³ and the Satyagraha was stopped. The Satyagraha "for the first time revealed to India the depth of the evil. Untouchability was known in every part of India but unapproachability was something unknown." Of course it was true that among the high caste Hindus in general the practice of untouchability in ordinary social life was progressively getting extinct.

The Vaikom settlement was a bed-rock of freedom "because the settlement is a document between the people in the State, constituting a big step in the direction of liberty in one respect at least."⁴

In January, 1926 a Satyagraha was offered for nearly a month by a Committee under the leadership of Dr. M. E. Naidu to get the roads around the Suchindram Temple opened. On that occasion Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai had an understanding with Mr. Pitt, Commissioner of Police, Travancore, by which the Government agreed to open the roads in question within a month after the stopping of the Satyagraha.⁵ Though the Satyagraha was stopped the roads continued to remain closed and the appeals made at various public meetings throughout the year fell on deaf ears.

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2. *Report of the Temple Entry Enquiry Committee, 1934.* The negative attitude of the Government was resented throughout the country. The S. N. D. P. *Yogam* passed resolutions at all its meetings demanding temple entry. Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai voiced the feelings of *savarna* Hindus at a protest meeting held at Trivandrum. The Kerala *Hindu Sabha*, the Nair Service Society, the *Yogakshema Sabha* and the *Kshatriya Mahasabha* lent support to the agitation.
 3. After the Temple Entry Proclamation of November, 1936, the road on the Eastern side also was thrown open to Harijans. (Brochure entitled *Temple Entry Legislation* by Mr. S. R. Venkataraman).
 4. Gandhiji's speech at Alleppey, 1927.
 5. Article in the *Malayala Rajyam* 8 June 1930.

On the occasion of his visit to Travancore⁶ in 1927, Gandhiji had an interview for an hour with Mr. M. E. Watts, Dewan of the State, on 9th October. They discussed caste disabilities in general and the temple entry issue in particular.

Mr. Watts dwelt upon the traditional religious toleration in the State⁷ as well as upon the progressive elevation of low caste men and non-Hindus to responsible and important posts under the Government. According to him there were only a few roads, in close proximity to temples, to which the depressed classes had no access yet. He added that temple entry as claimed by the *avarnas* could not possibly be assented to, for a social evil could be rectified only by time and a change of mentality as a result of education. "Old practices cannot be dynamited out of existence" but the "process must be one of slow attrition." It was one thing to guarantee civic rights to all but quite another to injure religious beliefs deeply held and established customs sincerely observed.⁸ Mr. Watts dissociated himself from Gandhiji's sympathetic remark that being a Christian

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6. Mr. C. W. E. Cotton wrote to Mr. Watts on 5 April, 1927 that Gandhiji's visit to Travancore was likely to be in the middle of June "when the monsoon is likely to restrict his peregrinations to some extent." As Gandhiji was a State guest on his previous visit Mr. Cotton suggested to the Dewan that Travancore might as well fall into line with Mysore and Cochin. "Experience has proved", he added ".....that he gives less trouble when treated in this way than as a free-lance."
 7. The presence of a Christian church in the heart of the Nambudiri settlement of Kilimanur was cited as proof of religious tolerance. Mr. Watts explained to Gandhiji the meaning of the term *Mappilla* as applied to the Muslims and the Christians in Travancore. He pointed out that all subjects in the State were regarded as members of the same family, the Hindus as sons and the others, as sons-in-law. (Watt's Note on conversation with Gandhiji dated 9 October, 1927). But Mr. Watts added that the spirit of tolerance which actuated the Government of Travancore also demanded that the religious beliefs and observances of the caste Hindus should be scrupulously respected. "People who claim toleration should not be intolerant to others."
 8. According to Mr. Watts there were Harijans who themselves were not in favour entering a temple as it would be an act of sacrilege. He pointed out to a case in which the Ezhavas resisted an attempt to admit a Pulaya into an Ezhava temple. He also quoted the case of Myladi where the Nadars who claimed the use of a Vellala Street for marriage and funeral processions, against usage upheld by the High Court, declined to extend the same privilege to Shanars in respect of a Nadar Street.

it would be difficult for him to work a policy against caste conservatism." He drew Gandhiji's attention to the fact that as the State of Travancore had been dedicated to Sri Padmanabha Swami its ruler must be looked upon as the custodian of a sacred trust. He could not be impartially aloof from the religious beliefs of his Hindu subjects and his administration, of which the Dewan was the head, was bound to safeguard the State religion and its observances.

It was pointed out to Gandhiji that the Travancore Devaswom Commissioner had, in consultation with Mr. Watts, really contemplated the possibility of opening the roads near the Suchindram Temple to Harijans; but it was found that at one particular length the road could not be thrown open as it was within pollution distance of the *sanctum sanctorum*. According to Mr. Watts, the idea of opening the roads entirely had perforce to be abandoned.⁹ As regards Tiruvarpu, Gandhiji insisted that non-Hindus who had been using the local lanes should not be deprived of their right; Mr. Watts stuck to his point that if any part of a street was actually within pollution distance it would not be possible to admit the *avarnas* into that particular spot.¹⁰ Gandhiji was rather of the view that

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9. Mr. Watts said that the placing of his sword of office for a week on the shrine of Sri Padmanabha Swamy was an annual ceremony. The sword was symbolic of the fact that the Dewan was the chief executive officer of the State and the ceremony was therefore emblematic and not meaningless. It implied the consecration of all executive functions to an idea, of which Sri Padmanabha Swamy was an embodiment. That idea, as Mr. Watts conceived it, was to carry out the administration in the true spirit of the principles of Hindu religion. His private religious beliefs had nothing to do with the idea on the basis of which he carried out his executive functions.
 10. The Government of Travancore had considered the question of laying out a diversion road or constructing a new road that would pass beyond pollution distance. But the difficulty was that the new road would have to pass through a densely packed block of dwelling houses. Moreover the new alignment would not help the untouchables except perhaps in sentiment. Mr. Watts stated that money was made out of the exclusion of low castes, in the shape of a levy on carts taken over the excluded road by caste men and that this source of income would disappear when the new Karkat Road, the making of which had been pressed for by the untouchables for nearly four decades would be completed.
 11. Mr. Watts explained that the Government's measures were only tentative or experimental and that he intended to visit the place before taking an ultimate decision.

the question of pollution should be tested in a court of law.¹² On the other hand Mr. Watts was against any precipitate action in such important matters and considered it unwise for a Government to allow themselves to be stampeded. At the conclusion of the interview, Gandhiji expressed profound admiration for the Ruler of Travancore and added that but for untouchability he would have liked nothing better than living in his beautiful State. He then bade farewell to Mr. Watts, "with much show of friendliness."

Gandhiji carried on "anxious negotiations" with the authorities in Travancore regarding the roads at Suchindram and Tiruvarpu. He especially appealed them to withdraw the order of externment passed against Mr. T. K. Madhavan as also that which prohibited the holding of meetings at Tiruvarpu. He persuaded the *savarnas* to agitate against untouchability and in 1927 permitted Mr. Madhavan and Mr. Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad even to start Individual Satyagraha for the cause of temple entry. The ramparts of caste prejudice were slowly being pulled down.

Mr. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai undertook a vigorous campaign subsequently in favour of temple entry and the abolition of untouchability. It was unfortunate, as he said,¹³ that a Hindu Maharaja's Government in Travancore had been keeping a large majority of the Hindus in ignorance and in a state of social inequality, which he attributed to the domination of reactionary traditions.¹⁴ The establishment of a Government responsible to the people and the control over Devaswom property to be utilised for social benefit were the two ideals to be achieved not through resort to violence or secret means but through non-violent struggle and possible

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12. Gandhiji commented that there was no Shastric sanction for pollution or untouchability. Mr. Watts too had thought of getting the Suchindram issue before a court of law. But the contending parties after agreeing to the course, practically wriggled out. Gandhiji suggested that the Government might announce their intention to throw open the roads within three months in which case the objectors would take out an injunction and get the case tried in a court of law; otherwise the Government could put their decision into effect unconditionally. But Mr. Watts rather thought that the Government could not allow matters to go by default.
 13. His Presidential address at the meeting of *Sahodara Sangh* at Shertallai. (File No. 834/1930.)
 14. Mr. Pillai wondered why the Government was against the reform though the Nambudiri Brahmins were in favour of it. He would attribute the Government's indifference to the influence exerted at the highest level by those who thought that they could protect their vested interests only by continuing the social and religious inequalities.

suffering. Mr. Pillai and Mr. T. K. Madhavan toured all over the land to collect funds, form committees and enlist volunteers who would be ready to die for the cause of temple entry.

As a result of the Vaikom settlement the Government had opened the roads near the temples at Kannankulangara, Tiruvarpu,¹⁵ and Ambalapuzha to the Harijans. In 1926 they had promised, as we noted earlier, to open the roads at Suchindram as well, but the promise was not kept on account of the pressure exerted by a few orthodox Hindus; the Government encouraged the Caste Hindus though indirectly, to oppose the agitation. It was therefore decided on 12 May, 1930 to start Satyagraha once again at Suchindram and this time the Government themselves opposed the Satyagrahis directly. Mr. Gandhi Raman Pillai of Eraviputhur, who had already participated in the first Satyagraha at Suchindram, was the leader of the agitation. He was arrested, along with his comrades, when he tried to cross the streets in question and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one year. On appeal, the High Court acquitted the accused and decided that the streets of Suchindram should be accessible to all as public pathways, irrespective of caste or creed, as a matter of right.¹⁶ After their release they walked along the streets concerned without obstruction for nearly a week after which Mr. Pitchu Iyengar, District Superintendent of Police, brought down a force of Reserve Police to prevent the untouchables from entering the streets during the festival period.¹⁷ So Mr. Gandhi

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15. In September, 1927 Messrs. T. K. Madhavan, C. Kuttan Nair, V. R. Nanu and C. K. Kunjukrishnan were severely assaulted as they were trying to take a photograph of the newly constructed road around the Tiruvarpu Temple. Mr. Kuttan Nair fainted as a result of the injuries sustained by him.
 16. Article on Suchindram Satyagraha in the Tamil Newspaper, the *Dravidan*, Madras, dated 21 January, 1931. According to the Government, the High Court had rather held that in the case brought up before them there was not sufficient evidence to establish satisfactorily that the streets in question were *grama veethis* and that their decision on the point did not affect any of the Satyagraha cases pending before the Additional District Magistrate's Court. Padmanabhapuram (Letter from the Dewan to Col. Prichard, February, 1931).
 17. It is stated that by custom only the Caste Hindus and Muslims enjoyed access to the roads; but practically the personal status of the individual decided the issue. None complained when Dr. Palpu used to walk along the road to have medical examination of the Sepoy-Guards posted at the entrance to the temple. Christian engineers made use of the road for supervising the repairs to the Government buildings nearby. The *savarnas* residing in the premises of the prohibited road used to entertain their

Raman Pillai again decided to start Satyagraha on 9 February 1931.¹⁸

The Yerawada Pact between the caste Hindus and the depressed classes following the historic fast of Gandhiji was ratified at the conference in Bombay held on 25 September 1932. The conference resolved that thenceforth none amongst Hindus was to be deemed an untouchable by reason of birth; those considered so in the past should have the same right as other Hindus regarding the use of public wells, roads schools and other public institutions. The statutory recognition of this right was to be one of the earliest acts of the *Swaraj* Parliament. All Hindu leaders should secure, by legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities imposed by custom on the untouchable classes including the bar in respect of admission to temples.

The Yerawada Pact and the conference at Bombay gave a definite impetus to the temple entry movement. Sustained efforts were made to bring about the desired changes in the status of Harijans in Hindu society.

On 8 November 1932 the Government of Travancore announced their decision to appoint a committee to enquire into and report on

Christian and *avarna* friends in their houses. As a matter of fact only the poor members of the depressed communities were denied the privilege, though the road in question was the easiest route from the neighbouring Karkat village to Kottar. They were using the longer, newly constructed road from Karkat to Suchindram, which itself was the result of the Satyagraha offered under Dr. M. E. Naidu.

18. It is said that Mr. Pillai had begun his second Satyagraha in 1930 without consulting the "important members" of the local society though he had a band of enthusiastic young men with him. After four or five days of Satyagraha and consequent arrests there was an attempt on the part of some influential men to effect a compromise with the authorities. But there was a difference of opinion between Congressmen and Self Respectors. The former wanted a compromise as they feared that the local agitation would obstruct the course of the more important Satyagraha in British India. The latter, under the influence of Mr. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, expected no concessions from the authorities and demanded the strengthening of the Satyagraha movement. They thought of holding a conference at Tirunelveli in June, 1930 to chalk out the future programme of action.

the question of temple entry.¹⁹ Mr. V. S. Subramania Iyer, retired Dewan of Travancore, was made the President of the Committee which included²⁰ eight other members. The Committee held its first sitting on 17 December 1932, circulated a questionnaire²¹ and made a tour of the different parts of the State. They submitted their report on 11 January 1934.

The Committee reported that according to custom and usage, no person of whatever caste, except those directly engaged in the services to the idol, was allowed entry into the inner shrine or

19. R. Dis. No. 648/Dev. dated 25 November, 1932, English Records, Trivandrum. The Committee was to report whether in the temples in the State the Caste Hindus enjoyed either an exclusive right of worship or recognisable civil rights in the matter of such worship and whether in any particular Caste Hindu temple there was any local practice limiting the entry of non-Caste Hindus. They were to assess the general feeling among the Caste Hindus about the efficacy of religious worship or rites if such entry was permitted and the opinion of all Hindus regarding the creation of social and religious equality by allowing temple entry. They were to consider the probable results, temporary and permanent, of the recognition of the right and the possibility of effecting a compromise between the orthodox and the progressive sections of the Hindu community. They were also to find out the extent to which the Government might interfere in private temples.
20. The members were Messrs. K. Parameswaran Pillai (High Court Judge) K. Anantanarayana Iyer (Retired Land Revenue Commissioner), M. Govindan (Retired Dewan Peishkar), T. K. Velu Pillai (High Court Vakil), T. Kesavan Shastri, a nominee of Tarananallur Nambudiripad, and Chingan Narayanan Bhattatiripad of Tiruvalla. Mr. Nambudiripad nominated Mr. Punbasserri Nambi Nilakanta Sarma, Principal, Sanskrit College, Pattambi who joined duty on 12 December 1932. On Mr. K. Anantanarayana Iyer's death on 28 May 1933, the Government appointed in his place Mr. S. K. Mahadeva Iyer, Retired Dewan Peishkar.
21. The Committee secured replies from 3122 persons of whom 2867 were *savarnas*. All the *savarnas* who sent replies were of the opinion that worship was more efficacious within than outside the temple premises so far as the sight of the image was necessary for full benefit to be derived. Of the *savarnas* who answered the questionnaire, 525 persons were against temple entry while 468 persons opined that it would very much enhance the dignity of the temple. Of the 325 *savarna* witnesses orally examined, 238 favoured temple entry. The Committee was convinced that there was a strong feeling among the *savarnas* in favour of temple entry though the opposition also was not negligible.

Garbhagriha.²² Other Brahmins and Kshatriyas would be allowed approach upto the steps or *sopana* in front of the inner shrine as well as the *Namaskara Mandapa* for devotional acts; Vaisyas and sudras could go as far as the steps but not on to the *Namaskara Mandapa*; those who were lower than Sudras in status and yet were not deemed unapproachables could proceed to the *Pradakshina Vazhi*, outside the *Nalambalam*; the unapproachables, subject to distance pollution, were to remain beyond the outer walls or outside the *Prakara*.

According to *Agama* works the entry of the class last mentioned would necessitate the performance of purificatory ceremonies in a temple.

The Committee noted that courts of law in British India and Travancore had recognised and enforced the customary law in the matter of temple entry²³ and that places of worship were being protected by the criminal law of the land, from defilement by the

22. The important parts of a temple are the *Garbhagriha* or *sanctum sanctorum*; the *Mandapa* in front of it in the inner *Ankana*; the Kitchen; the *Balimandapa* and the *Kootambalam* or dancing hall; the last one alone is outside the *Nalambalam*. *

23. In 1885 Mr. Justice Muthuswami Iyer of the High Court of Madras (in the case reported in 1 *Weir*, page 253) held that defilement would include ceremonial pollution also. The object of the law was to prevent wanton insult, through defilement, to the religious notions of that class of persons who were holding a place or an object of worship as sacred. This ruling came to be subsequently followed in British India. The High Court of Travancore also accepted the same interpretation of defilement as given by the High Court of Madras. Thus the entry, on one occasion, of some Ezhavas into the Kadakavur temple in Chirayinkil Taluk was held punishable under section 294 of the Penal Code as it constituted the defilement of a temple.

Again there was the case that arose when the Raja of Ramnad, the hereditary trustee of the Kamudi Temple, brought an action against some Nadars who entered it as a matter of right. The courts in India decreed the suit and the Privy Council too on appeal upheld their decisions. (*Report in I. L. R.* 31 Madras, 236). The decision is important as implying that the right to protect a temple from pollution by the entry of *avarnas* was exercisable not only by the trustee but also by the *savarna* worshippers as beneficiaries.

The rationale of these decisions, according to the Committee, was that a Hindu temple was not a public place like a public school or road and that worship in the temple should be regulated by usage which, in the absence of documentary evidence as to the original intention of the foundation, might be taken as showing that intention. Though the temples

unapproachables²⁴ The courts treated the right of the *savarnas* to keep the *avarnas* out of the temples as a civil right capable of adjudication in a court of law. The Committee was of the view that in Travancore there was no *savarna* temple where local practice permitted the entry of non-caste Hindus.²⁵

However the Committee pleaded for the uplift of the *avarnas* educationally, socially and economically and suggested that distance-pollution or *teendal* should be removed by appropriate legislation subject to some limitations in the matter of entry into temples, temple tanks, wells, *homapuras* etc.²⁶

were intended for the benefit of all Hindus, they were subject to the restrictions imposed by usage as to the places upto which the various communities could go for worship. Mr. Justice Sadashiva Iyer said that though the *avarnas* were not excluded from the benefit of temple worship, their mode of worship was subject to severe restrictions. (*Gopala Moopannar Vs. Dharmakoti Subramania Iyer*, 1914, M. W. N. Page 822). Mr. Justice Tyabji was of the view that the question of temple entry would depend on the original dedication, that it was a reflex of the general religious notions of those for whose benefit the temple was dedicated and that the dedication would reasonably follow the current of prevalent religious sentiments.

24. According to section 295 of the Indian Penal Code corresponding to section 294 of the Travancore Penal Code, "whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship or any object held sacred by any class of persons, with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons, or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to their religion shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years or with fine or with both."
25. Some of the witnesses had given statements to the effect that in the matter of exclusion of the untouchables there were exceptions based on local practice or *kshettrachara* in some temples. But such exceptions referred to by the witnesses had been denied and rejected by the Devaswom Department.
26. The Committee suggested that public tanks used for bathing purpose could be thrown open after attaching separate cisterns to them or walling off certain portions; public wells could be thrown open after providing them with cisterns in which water might be stored and from which water might be drawn through taps. Government *Satrams* or Choultries could be thrown open after they were provided with separate kitchens for the benefit of *avarnas* requiring help. *Bhajanamadhoms* could be constructed religious discussions instituted, schools opened, and proper housing and sanitation provided; in important centres temples might be built where *avarnas* and *savarnas* could worship together, the latter however retaining their full right of worship in temples where *avarnas* could not be admitted,

The sovereign, according to the Committee, enjoyed, under many systems of law, special rights and duties for the protection of those who could not safeguard their own interests. In English law the sovereign would have the right of superintendence over trusts through the Chancellor and his court; similarly the Hindu Rajas in Malabar exercised from ancient times the right of superintendence known as *Melkoima* over charitable trusts and *Devasthanams*.²⁷ In exercise of this right the sovereign could sweep aside the trustees and step into their place to administer the trust property in a manner consistent with the intention of the founder of the trust. In Travancore the Sovereign had assumed in the past the management of several religious institutions.²⁸ The passing of the Hindu Religious Endowments Regulation in 1903 was an instance of State interference.²⁹ On the whole the Government enjoyed, by virtue of *Melkoima* right, full powers of a trustee in the temples under their management. As regards those under private management they could exercise the *Melkoima* right of superintendence with a view to the proper administration of the temples by the trustees and when necessary, they could themselves take over the management.

27. *Melkoima* has been defined as the "right which the sovereign power possesses over property of which ownership is in others. It is a right of superintendence, an incident of sovereignty." (*Raja Muthuramalinga Sethupathy Vs. Perianayagam Pillai*, 1 *Indian Appeals* 209, page 233). According to Justice Holloway, it "is not only not the same but absolutely incompatible with ownership. It was the right of the sovereign power possessed over property of which the legal ownership was in others."

28. The most important instance of assumption was the act of the Government in 987 M. E. (1812) by which the management of 378 temples with their endowment was assumed on account of mismanagement by the *Ooralars*. The Proclamation of 1922 effected the separation of the *Devaswom* from the Revenue Department and made it clear that the assumption of 1812 was only an act in exercise of *Melkoima* right and not an act of confiscation.

29. Other instances of Governmental interference are indicated by the admission of Chakkala Nairs into temples, the opening of wards in the vicinity of temples to *avarnas*, the abolition of animal sacrifice, the admission into temples of those who had made sea voyages, the abolition of *Poora-pattu* (vulgar songs) in the Shertallai Temple and the abolition of the *Devadasi* system.

The Committee considered several avenues for a compromise,³⁰ of which the two possible forms were entry for all untouchables as far as *Balivattam* in all *savarna* temples and the opening of some of the existing temples in the several Taluks for all Hindus, the others being reserved for the exclusive worship of the *savarnas*. It was desirable that with a general change in social attitude, all possible steps should be taken to give the *avarnas* greater facilities for worship in *savarna* temples, without however weakening the faith of the orthodox Hindus in the temples and in the sanctity of the deity installed in them. The Committee recommended that the extent to which the rule prohibiting entry to the *avarnas* was to be modified might be determined by the Sovereign on the advice of a *Parishad*.³¹

The Committee's report was published³² on 21 April 1934. No immediate action was taken by the Government of Travancore on account of the conflicting viewpoints expressed in it and the necessity for a rapprochement to be effected among them. However the Government was convinced that distance-pollution or *theendal* should cease and that public funds should not be spent for the maintenance of public tanks, wells, etc. admission to which was restricted by scruples of caste. The Government resolved that "all public roads, public tanks, public wells, *Chatranis*, etc., maintained by them out of the general public funds shall be thrown open to all classes of people irrespective of the caste to which they belong."³³ The measures to carry out this resolution were actually taken in May, 1936.

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30. One solution to the problem was to allow the *avarnas* to enter within the outer walls but not within the *Nalambalam*; they might go as far as the *Pradakshina Vazhi* or *Balivattam*. A second solution was to open temples in some parts of the State for common worship by *avarnas* and *savarnas*, the former being allowed to proceed upto the *Sopana* like the latter. A third suggestion was that new temples might be built in which all Hindus could worship without distinction.
 31. The Committee recommended that such a *Parishad* might be composed of *Tantris*, *Vadyars*, *Vaidiks*, *Azhuvancherry*, *Tambrakal* and others, learned in the *Sastras* and conscious of changes in modern society. A change in the *smritis* was to be made by that body to whom that function has been assigned in the *smritis* themselves. Any relaxation in the prohibitory rules would be satisfactory to the orthodox *savarnas* if it was made by a properly constituted *Parishad* who could speak with undisputed authority.
 32. Two members of the Committee, Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai and Mr. M. Govindan, in their minority report, advocated the immediate opening of the temple but the majority were highly cautious in their recommendations.
 33. *The Epic of Travancore*, page, 23.

Thus the sincere efforts of the past were beginning to bear fruit. The psychological background had been so much effectively prepared that no *savarna* raised a voice of protest against the Government's resolution. Mr. T. K. Madhavan virtually wore himself away in the pursuit of the noble cause.³⁴ The teachings of Sri Narayana Guru Swamikal had given vigour and strength to the reform movement. Gandhiji's epic fast in 1932 and Mr. Kelappan's fast at Guruvayur had made a substantial emotional appeal to the conservative Hindus who at last got ready to set fire to the accumulated heap of superstition sanctified by custom and usage. The Guruvayur referendum organised by Mr. C. Rajagopalachari was of great educative value. In his historic "Harijan tour" Gandhiji indeed conducted a holy crusade, "rousing Hindu public opinion, meeting orthodox face to face, and accepting their sneers and taunts and rowdy demonstrations and even violence with a smile and a cheer, burning the holy flame when there was the slightest fear of violence on the part of reformers, reasoning with those who threatened to break away from Hinduism or to renounce religion itself and so cut at the root instead of lopping off the poisonous branch."³⁵ Dr. Ambedkar's call to the Harijans to break away from the Hindu fold and the readiness of several non-Hindu missionary organisations to accept the renegades to their own proved to be an "electric shock" to the workers for Harijan uplift. Mr. G. Ramachandran's suggestion made in January, 1936 for an organised agitation for temple entry was supported by Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai and Mr. M. Govindan and accepted by the Central Board of the Harijan *Sevak Sangh*. Gandhiji recommended "an accurate referendum" to ascertain the wishes of a majority of *savarna* Hindus in Travancore on the issue of temple entry.

In consultation with Gandhiji an intensive campaign was organised between April and June, 1936. Smt. Rameswari Nehru presided over the All-Kerala Temple Entry Conference held at Trivandrum on 9 and 10 May under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Board of the Harijan *Sevak Sangh*. An appeal was made to the Government of Travancore to open immediately all State-controlled temples to Harijans. Public opinion was mobilised in favour of the great reforms. A deputation³⁶ appointed by the Kerala Harijan *Sevak Sangh* made a tour of Travancore and at every place received a warm welcome. Persons in thousands gave their signatures in favour of temple

34. He expired towards the end of April 1930.

35. *The Epic of Travancore*, page, 32.

36. It included Messrs. M. Govindan, K. G. Kunjukrishna Pillai, K. P. Nilakanta Pillai, V. Achutha Menon, Damodara Menon and G. Ramachandran.

entry.³⁷ Even those who had opposed it at the time of the Guruvayur Satyagraha registered a welcome change in their attitude. The elders of the Ezhava community counselled patience to the younger members who were wildly talking about a mass conversion to another faith. The tour undertaken by Mrs. Rameshvari Nehru in the State during April, 1936 was most successful.³⁸ It was followed by that of A. V. Thakkar, then Chairman of the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh and Sri Ghanashyamdas Birla who was assured by the Maharani of Travancore and her son, the Maharaja, that the reform would no longer be delayed. The deputation sent by the All-Kerala Temple Entry Conference submitted a memorial to the Dewan, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer on 3 November 1936 demanding temple entry for the Harijans.³⁹

Finally on 12 November which coincided with his twenty-fifth birthday, the Maharaja issued the historic Temple Entry Proclamation:⁴⁰

Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of Our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on an all-comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has, throughout the centuries, adapted itself to the needs of

37. Malabar was enthusiastic though in Cochin the movement was slow. The propaganda was most concentrated in Central Travancore where the Ezhava masses in particular were impressed by the sincerity of the workers, including the *Valia Raja* of Ennakkad, and Messrs. Pandavath Sankara Pillai and K. Kumar. In south Travancore, as Dr. M. E. Naidu reported, there was distinctly a favourable change in *savarna* mentality. Mr. K. Kesava Kurup worked in the region of Pandalam.

38. The meetings addressed by her were attended by women of all communities. One of the meetings was presided over by Smt. Devaki Antarjanam a Namudiri lady.

39. It was signed by 50,522 *savarna* Hindus of Travancore.

40. *Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Souvenir*, 1942. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer claimed that the Proclamation was not the result of the efforts of Gandhiji and that temple entry was granted in Travancore after his efforts had failed. During the next few years after 1936 nearly two million people from all over India had visited the temples in the State, numbering more than 2,000. Mr. Ramaswamy Iyer, referring to an article in the January (1943) issue of the *Asiatic Review*, challenged the allegation by Sir Hassan Suharwardy that the temples were being purified and fumigated after the departure of the *avarna* worshippers. In no temple was the concession restricted as to the hours of worship or as to the class of priests who might officiate. (See his letter dated 29 July, 1943 to Sir Frank Herbert Brown, Hon. Secretary, East India Association, London).

changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth or caste or community, be denied the consolations and solace of the Hindu faith. We have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion for entering or worshipping at the temples controlled by us and Our Government.

Never in the history of India could the birth day of a Maharaja be celebrated with a greater sense of happiness universally felt than that of the young Maharaja of Travancore. By "the sublimity of its conception, the loftiness of its ideals and the magnitude of its effects," the Proclamation naturally came to occupy a unique place in the socio-religious life of India. Rightly has it been stated that "no act of reform of any Ruler in India has so far stirred the hearts, roused the enthusiasm or evoked the gratitude of the people to the extent that this momentous Proclamation has done."⁴¹ A stroke of the pen transformed a dark patch into a bright spot and inaugurated a new Hindu renaissance. This royal charter of liberty removed an impenetrable, though invisible, barrier between man and man in the Hindu community. The corrupted doctrine of *varnashrama* that led to "purposeless multiplication" of castes had become indeed a melancholy landmark in Indian history and the Proclamation was the effective answer that an enlightened Maharaja could give to the bitter sentiments about Kerala expressed earlier by Swami Vivekananda. It was the "voluntary act" of a Sovereign with "an unprecedented courage and a deep-seated and heroic faith to break through such traditions."⁴² Behind the Proclamation stood the "sympathy and boundless humanity" of the Maharaja's mother as well as the statesmanlike conception of the able administrator, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer. Untouchability would no longer have any legal recognition in the State. The *avarnas* were freed from the yoke under which they had been groaning for centuries. It required magnanimity, vision and courage to surmount age-long prejudices and perform as much an act of liberation as an act of supreme statesmanship.

To Gandhiji the Proclamation was a "miracle of modern times" and he predicted that the Maharaja would "live longer in the memory of man than any other Maharaja for having issued a *Smriti* which is the people's charter of spiritual emancipation."⁴³ He

41. *Report of the Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Committee*, Page 1.

42. *Ibid.* Introduction by Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer.

43. *Ibid.* Introduction by Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, page 2.

congratulated the Travancore Durbar and its advisers and hoped that the Proclamation would be put into effect in letter and in spirit, for it would make the Harijans happy and lead to social integration. He added that it was "the work of God who blessed the humble efforts of man" and that it was "a mass conversion of the caste Hindus which no reformer or Missionary could have wrought."⁴⁴ The Proclamation was received with rejoicing everywhere and it was hailed as similar to an Asokan edict. According to Mr. C. Rajagopalachari it was "easily the most non-violent and bloodless revolution in the history of man in recent years"⁴⁵ He was of the view that no Ruler in India since the time of Asoka the Great had conveyed to the people a happier message. The Maharaja's Proclamation, according to Sardar Vallabhai Patel, was the greatest of the achievements of Gandhiji in regard to the eradication of untouchability. Deenabandhu C. F. Andrews could not contain himself with joy and he looked upon the Proclamation as the fruit of Gandhiji's fast in Yerawada jail four years earlier. The *Manchester Guardian*, London, praised the Maharaja for the great act of reform. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru thought that the Proclamation and the atmosphere created by it would be helpful to the economic regeneration as well. It was deemed to be the greatest step, since the times of Ramanujacharya, to reform Hinduism. "Where other rulers have hesitated", observed Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Iyer, "the young Maharaja of Travancore has taken courage into his hands and led the assault. The hour for laying the mine arrived and the man appeared on the scene (The Proclamation)will have effects in other directions besides that of temple entry, in the direction of social and religious reform. It will raise the self-respect of the depressed classes diminish the cleavage that is a feature of the society at the present time and will contribute to the national cohesion and solidarity Restrictions on temple entry have no connection with the essentials of religion."⁴⁶ "Hinduism is not petrified or fossilized", observed Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, "but it is a living faith, and adapting itself to the changing needs of the changing times as His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore's Proclamation proves".⁴⁷ "If we want consolidation of the Hindu community", he opined,^{47a}

44. According to Gandhiji, the Proclamation should have no political significance as it had none. He regarded it as the performance of a purely religious duty of the State and to give it any other colour would only be to destroy its general spiritual purpose and effect. (Gandhiji's Article on the Proclamation, dated 21-11-1936.)

45. *Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Souvenir*, page 2.

46. *Temple Entry Legislation* by S. R. Venkataraman.

47. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer's address at Shertallai, 18 January, 1937.

47a. His speech at the Gokhale Hall, Madras, on 31 August, 1937.

"we have to be fair to all the different elements of the community. Not only has this reform aroused self-consciousness, but the essence of the change is the feeling that each man counts for something and is a vital element in the life of the nation. If His Highness and those who advised him stop with the Proclamation they would be untrue to their ideals, untrue to the hopes that they had generated, unless those men, the so-called untouchables--they are no longer termed depressed but are called backward communities in Travancore--unless they, these younger brethren of ours are brought to our level in education, brought to our level in physical culture, brought to our level in all that go to make up the sweet and holy things of life, unless all this is done and done soon, unless a definite programme is laid down for that purpose, we shall have failed". The Temple Entry Proclamation, he stated elsewhere,^{47b} "means to the Hindu that his community is being consolidated with a new sense of equality of opportunities, equality in the sight of man and God. To the Christian it means the possibility of more conjoint action, more harmony with a really consolidated, united, harmonious and well-knit organisation..... The message of the Proclamation is a message first of self-respect, secondly of self-vindication, thirdly of self-realisation, fourthly of consolidation and fifthly of harmony this Proclamation is the harbinger of a new peace, of a new friendship and of a new comradeship between all communities and classes....."

The citizens of the State resolved to commemorate the historic Proclamation by erecting a statue of the Maharaja;⁴⁸ the surplus of the funds collected was utilized to create the Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Endowment.⁴⁹

47b. His address at Mavelikkara, on 19 October, 1937.

48. Mr. Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhury was commissioned to make the bronze statue that was cast by an Italian firm. The statue was erected in the Iron Villa grounds within the Fort, Trivandrum. The foundation stone of the pedestal was laid by the Maharaja of Bikaner on 26 January, 1939 and the statue was unveiled by the Maharaja of Dholpur. Another statue, erected by the citizens of Madras, was unveiled by Lord Erskine, Governor of Madras, on 28 October, 1939. On that occasion, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Iyer observed: "That this great reform should have been introduced in a country like Travancore which has long been the home of the most exclusive orthodoxy will be a matter for *marvel*..... The impetus given by the Proclamation to the Temple Entry Movement all over India has been very far-reaching and the movement has now acquired the force of an avalanche....."

49. The interest from the Endowment was to be utilised for the award of scholarships to the members of backward Hindu communities "in the order and proportion of their backwardness."

The Proclamation was followed by the framing of a set of rules⁵⁰ to regulate worship in the State-owned and public temples. They were necessary to preserve the proper atmosphere in the temple precincts. Democracy envisages social good manners; and one had to carry out the spirit as well as the letter of the Proclamation. Gandhiji stated:⁵¹

"I had thought that the State would at least have to post a strong police force at the main temples and that at least a few heads would be broken. But no. The process began with the biggest State temple, the one where the Maharaja himself worships. There was no political pressure here; it could not be imposed on a million people; I had no idea that there were nearly 2,000 temples in Travancore. I only knew that over ten years ago our volunteers had been severely hammered for even crossing a forbidden road near the temple at Vaikom. Now the humblest of the humble have entered the Vaikom Temple without the slightest difficulty. The Proclamation did not enthuse me though it was a solid thing, for I had feared that there might be a political motive behind it. But all my fears have been dispelled. That the orthodox who used to swear by the letter of the ritual and made so much of the efficacy of temple worship being destroyed by even the Paria's shadow would fall in with the Proclamation is a thing I was not prepared for so soon at any rate. But God has made possible what man could not have done."

Gandhiji was of the opinion that the responsibility for executing the Proclamation lay on the shoulders of the social reformers as well as the Harijans. They should make use of the new liberty with religious reverence and in an attitude of humility. The reformers should insist that the Harijans would enter the temples only in clean personal condition, for the rule regarding cleanliness was respected more in its breach than observance, by the caste Hindus whose bad example the Harijans should never follow.

50. The rules provided for the observance and maintenance of the customs and usages relating to worship and ceremonies obtaining in temples. They specified the classes of persons who should not enter the temples. Persons who are not Hindus, those under pollution arising from birth or death in their families, drunken or disorderly persons, women at certain times, professional beggars, etc., were not to enter the temples. The rules prescribed in general terms, the dress of the worshippers and the objects which they were prohibited from carrying into the temples. Gandhiji was satisfied that the rules were being sympathetically administered and that there was a wonderful change in the life, attitude and behaviour of the Harijans.

51. *The Epic of Travancore*, page 44.

Gandhiji came on a 'pilgrimage' to Travancore in January 1937. This was his fourth visit.⁵² On 10 January, 1937 he left Poona for Trivandrum as a pilgrim, not as crusader, to witness the joy of emancipation "from age-old shackles." His tour was so organised⁵³ that he could visit every important temple which he had deliberately refrained from visiting on previous occasions. Everywhere he noticed a new wave of enthusiasm and called upon the people to eradicate untouchability. The evil was religious in character and it therefore had to be attacked in the temple, the symbol and centre of religious life. The Proclamation was not an end in itself but the beginning of the social amelioration of the Harijans. Their true regeneration would also have to include economic uplift as well as the eradication of everything that retarded human progress.

Anyway the process of social transformation was a slow one. Travancore in fact caught other States in India napping. It took some more time for them to fall in line with the noble example set by Travancore⁵⁴ in religious dynamism.

In Cochin the people continued to make several appeals to the Maharaja to fall in line with the State of Travancore. But there was no positive response. A new temple was built where the Harijans were allowed to worship along with the reformist *savarnas*. Those priests who had served in the temples of Travancore after the

52. In the course of the first, he had appealed to the authorities to accord the *avarnas* the elementary right to use all public roads. His second visit was to popularise khadi though the curse of untouchability also came in for censure and comment on his part. In the course of his third visit in 1934 for the same purpose he did not, unfortunately, have the cooperation of the State authorities.

53. There were celebrations at Trivandrum on 13 January, 1937. He went to Kanyakumari, after addressing a huge gathering in front of Thiruvattar temple on the way. The pilgrimage, as Mr. Mahadeva Desai put it, was almost a "sacred bath in the great Ganges of revival and self purification....." At Chengannur, Gandhiji opened to *avarnas* for the first time a private temple belonging to the Nambudiris, and at Kottarakara another private temple belonging to Mr. K. N. Nambudiripad. The crowd that gathered at Vaikom was perhaps the largest, numerically. He addressed meetings at several places and visited twenty-four temples on the whole in the course of his pilgrimage in the State.

54. In the Bangalore (Cantonment) Municipal Council a resolution was moved on 17 December, 1936 to congratulate the Maharaja of Travancore but the President disallowed it as not coming within the scope of its normal activities.

Temple Entry Proclamation were prevented from performing the rites in the famous temple at Irinjalakuda.

All religious ceremonies conducted from time immemorial by the Maharaja of Cochin in some of the temples in Travancore such as the Vaikom Temple were now stopped. The Maharaja also ordered that the worship in the temples of Cochin State should be stopped, in case they were situated near the temples of Travancore State, already polluted by the entry of the *avarnas*. The Dewan, Mr. R. K. Shanmukham Chetty, stated that he would not advise the Maharaja on matters of religion.

Taking advantage of the temple controversy at Irinjalakuda, the *savarna* reactionaries were conducting vigorous propaganda, to counter which an Executive Committee was constituted in May, 1937, with Mr. K. Ayyappan as President, Mr. C. K. Narayanan as Secretary, and Mr. T. S. Krishnan as Treasurer, and seven others as members.⁵⁵ It was resolved to submit a mass memorial to the Maharaja requesting him to open to every Hindu all temples owned or administered by the Government. The Cochin Temple Entry Committee of which Mr. V. K. Sankaran was the Secretary decided⁵⁶ to start Satyagraha in front of the temple at Irinjalakuda with effect from 4 November, 1937. The Committee also decided to organise a *jatha* from Cheruthuruthi, the northern end of the State to Ernakulam to mobilise public opinion in favour of temple entry.⁵⁷

Finally, after several efforts and much exercise of pressure, the Cochin Temple Entry Authorisation Proclamation V of 1123 was passed (in 1948). This was amended by Ordinance No. X of 1124 (in 1949). Later in February, 1950 when the Legislative Assembly of the Travancore-Cochin State was not in session the Rajpramukh found it necessary to amend the Proclamation of 1948, by issuing an Ordinance called the Cochin Temple Entry Authorisation Proclamation (Amendment) Ordinance.⁵⁸ It was put into force with immediate effect. It defined the temple as a place of public religious worship "dedicated to or for the benefit of or used as of right by the Hindu community or any person thereof," the term including "subsidiary shrines as well as tanks appurtenant to the temple." The Cochin Devaswom Board was made responsible for the administration of the temples in the State. The ordinance of 1949 was repealed but the repeal would not affect the previous

55. The *Deepam* dated 25 May, 1937.

56. *Ibid* dated 28 August, 1937.

57. *Ibid* dated 27 January, 1938.

58. *Gazette Extra-ordinary*, Vol. I No. 14, Saturday, 4 February, 1950.

operation thereof as well as any order made, action taken or proceedings instituted in the exercise of any power conferred by or under that ordinance.

As regards British Malabar, on 7 November, 1937, the All-Malabar Temple Entry Conference was held⁵⁹ at Guruvayur under the presidency of Mr. P. Kundu Panikkar, retired District Judge. The Conference congratulated the Raja of Idapally who on 17 August 1937 had thrown open his temples to all Hindus, as well as the great *savarna* leader, Azhuvancherry Tambrakal, who in September had fully supported the Travancore Proclamation. Resolutions were sponsored requesting the Government of Madras to effect temple entry legislation. It was also suggested that there should be renewal of Satyagraha at Guruvayur in case the Congress Ministry in Madras would not effect the opening of all temples to the *avaras* through proper legislation within six months. Finally the Madras Hindu Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Act was passed⁶⁰ in 1938. The Malabar Temple Entry Bill⁶¹ was passed on 8 December 1938. The cause for which Mr. Kelappan offered to lay down his life in 1932 thus won at last. The cherished aspirations of the down-trodden sections of the Hindu community were realised and full religious equality was established.

59. The *Deepam* dated 10 November, 1937. The Conference was inaugurated by Dr. T.S. S. Rajan, Minister for Religious Endowments, Madras, and addressed by Messrs. K. Kelappan, U. Gopala Menon, Rama Varma of Ennakad, M. P. Govinda Menon and Katatanad Rama Varma Raja.

60. Fort St. George Gazette, dated 19 April, 1938. The Act was passed because it was increasingly felt by the Hindu community that the disabilities imposed by custom and usage on certain classes in respect of entry into the temples should be removed. It was expedient that the law as admitted by the courts should no longer prevent a trustee from allowing any class of Hindus entry into temples if the Hindu community in the locality was generally prone to allow such entry.

61. In the Draft Malabar Temple Entry Bill (30 August, 1938) it was proposed that temple entry for the Harijans should be permitted if a majority of the *Savarnas* in the Taluk in which the temple was situated would approve of it. Those individuals could take part in the referendum whose names were included in the electoral rolls in regard to elections to the District Boards and the Municipalities. Not less than fifty votes in a locality could demand such a referendum.

CHAPTER 26

THE CRY FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT IN TRAVANCORE

In this Chapter we propose to deal with the developments in Travancore after 1922 which led to the Abstention Movement that characterised the thirties of this century.

The Act of 1919 had introduced partially responsible government in British Indian Provinces. In Travancore also the idea of responsible government began to take root in popular mind.¹

As a result of the political training and experience gained by people as Members of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, the Legislative Council, the Municipalities and other bodies working for the public good, it is not surprising that they began to evince the desire for the establishment of responsible government in the State. But the immediate cause that urged the Members of the Legislature to take up the issue of responsible Government in 1922 was the unfortunate students' strike and its aftermath. On 5 March, 1922, a reference was made in the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly to the need for a thorough reform of the Department of Education, the inefficiency of which was pointed out to be the main cause of the students' strike.² It was argued that the enhancement of fees in the educational institutions, without any regard for public opinion would only serve to frustrate the Government's policy in regard to the spread of English education by rendering it beyond the means of the masses.³

The people had watched the different stages of the students' strike and were not convinced about the soundness of the arguments

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1. When Mr. T. Raghaviah assumed the Dewanship, public opinion demanded an increase in the number of non-official Members as well as freedom for the official Members to express opinions and vote as they pleased in the Legislative Chambers. It was considered desirable to have an Executive Council, with official and non-official members, to advise and help the Dewan in administration so that he might get some relief from his onerous responsibilities and a one-man autocracy might be avoided in future.
 2. Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Proceedings, T. K. Velu Pillai's speech, 8 March 1922.
 3. Ibid. P. Padmanabha Pillai's speech in the Assembly.

advanced or the accuracy of the statements made in the press communique issued by the Government on the subject.* The Government's hesitation or refusal to appoint a committee to enquire into the various incidents connected with the strike was considered as the strongest proof of the need for the early establishment of responsible government in the State. There was a genuine feeling that the administration of the State was not being carried on in the general interests of the people or in accordance with their wishes. In point of taxation or the creation of posts carrying high salaries the wishes of the people were never consulted. It was felt that the Dewan's shaping of policy in the several Departments, like Education or Excise Departments, had been neither steady nor definite in the past. Mr. Raman Pillai, Member, therefore suggested in the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly that a Council of Ministers should be formed to advise the Maharaja in administration. The Dewan might preside over the Council which should have more than two Members, to be elected by the non-official Members of the Legislative Council and to be removable from office on their losing the confidence of that body.*

Subsequently the Government drafted some new rules for the Popular Assembly to which they intended to give effect, in utter

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4. Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Proceedings, K. P. Raman Pillai's speech, 11th March 1922. See also the *Swarat*. Quilon, dated 25th September 1923. The Dewan was not responsible to the people. It was pointed out that if he were an officer legally chosen from a representative body he would have offered satisfactory explanation for the cavalry charge on the students at Trivandrum.
 5. Raman Pillai's speech in the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 11th March 1922. Mr. K. P. Narayana Pillai, Member from Chengannur, also supported the demand for responsible government in the State. As examples of the evils of one-man rule responsible to none, he pointed out to the freedom extended to the Europeans to reside in the State and acquire property; the deportation, without lawful trial, of Mr. K. Ramakrishna Pillai for having criticised the Dewan's administration; the Government's decision to contribute to the Cochin Harbour Project at a time of financial stringency; the treatment of the students of Trivandrum during their strike; the creation of new posts carrying high salaries; the special preference extended to the Europeans in the matter of salaries; the utter neglect of Development Departments; and the lack of encouragement of the regional language. Mr. M. R. Velu Karanavar referred to the futility of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly and the Legislative Council as real representative institutions. Firmly of the view that communal strife would disappear with the establishment of responsible government, he suggested the appointment of a committee of non-officials to submit definite proposals to satisfy popular aspirations.

disregard of public protest from all quarters. The resignation tendered by the Members of the Rules Committee of the Popular Assembly in 1923 and the Government's curt acceptance of it were interpreted as an indication of the Government's intention not to grant any more concession in future.⁶ The Popular Assembly, it was feared, might not get the power to put questions, discuss the budget or move resolutions, which was being enjoyed by its sister institutions in Mysore or Pudukottah. Some of the political leaders wondered why Mr. Raghaviah who was instrumental in giving Travancore a reformed Legislative Council should have been somewhat rigid in his attitude to the Popular Assembly. Clearly, if the Government's intention was to introduce bicameralism, the Popular Assembly ought not to continue to remain merely as a petitioning or speech-making body but should have a stronger foundation for its existence than a mere Government order. The curtailment of its powers should be removed and its Membership dignified by increased powers and responsibilities. Only the power to divide and record the vote could give the Assembly the respectability of a corporate body. The press called on the people to throw out the new Assembly rules and demand the establishment of responsible government and the re-constitution, as a preliminary measure, of the Popular Assembly with wide powers, to be composed of the Members of the Assembly Rules Committee and other leaders of public opinion.⁷

The Legislative Council had powers to discuss the budget, make interpellations, move resolutions and record the opinion of the Members. It was felt in certain quarters that it would be perhaps superfluous and taxing to the Government officers if the same powers were to be granted to the Popular Assembly also. A view was expressed therefore that it would be sufficient to have one representative institution to be named Sri Mulam Legislative Council combining both the bodies then in existence.⁸ As the Popular Assembly Committee opined, the appointment of a committee to consider the place to be assigned to representative institutions in the Government of Travancore was a desideratum; anyway the administrative machinery was not to turn purely round the mental disposition of one or even

6. *Trivandrum Daily News*. 5 July 1923.

7. The *Samadarshi*, Trivandrum, 5 July, 1923. The paper pointed out that the application of force as used against Jayanthan Sankaran Namboodiri by Velu Thanpi Dalava was no longer feasible so far as there were machine guns of the British behind the autocratic deeds of the Dewan. The policy of non-violent non-co-operation alone would be practically effective as a remedy for the acts of the Government of Travancore

8. See the *Pouran*, Kayamkulam dated 14, July 1923.

of a few persons.⁹ The existing practice of a few officers, not enjoying popular confidence, giving in the name of the people, information of all sorts to the Paramount Power was to be stopped. Nothing, beneficial to the land, could be expected from a Dewan who was a servant of another Government brought into the State and who did things according to the dictates of that *Raj*. The Dewan of an Indian State, lent from British Indian Service, could not but dance to the tunes of the British Government. In fact the administration in a State like Travancore was being conducted both by a "Black Resident" and a 'White Resident'.¹⁰ It was realised that the citizens of the Princely States should participate in the freedom struggle of British India in so far as the establishment of responsible governments in the States was inextricably connected with that of democratic government in British India. Travancore, it was felt, should drift with India's political currents and not remain as an isolated unit so that she could realise the popular aspirations at the earliest opportunity.

The existing relations between Travancore and the British Government also gave much anxiety to political thinkers in the State. The "Princes and States in alliance with Her Majesty" of 1861 and 1876 had become those "under the suzerainty of Her Majesty" in 1889. "Alliance" had been transformed into "allegiance."¹¹ The Princes and their subjects were isolated from each other and the transformation of the former into the servants of the latter alone could pierce through the vicious circle. It was increasingly felt that the old treaty concluded with the British Indian Government gave Travancore practically no freedom of action and that it should be so revised as to give the State an equal status and as to be equally binding on both the Governments.¹² Such a revision was felt to be most essential, especially on the background of the compelled abdication of the Maharaja of Nabha, an advocate of *swaraj* and a friend of Gandhiji, Gokhale, Tilk and other leaders. The assumption that the British Indian Government could assume the administration of a State after removing its Ruler was considered to be basically false from a democratic view-point in as much as the Ruler and the Government were representatives of the people in whom sovereign power lies.¹³ The policy adopted in Nabha might be extended to other States also in future. It was a grave matter that a Maharaja was deposed by a foreign Government without the knowledge of the

9. *Ibid.*

10. Article by Mr. Kuruvilla Mathew in the *Samadarsi*, Trivandrum, dated 18 August 1923.

11. The *Malayati*, Quilon, dated 20 June 1923.

12. The *Malayati*, Quilon dated 16 July 1923.

13. *Ibid*, dated 18 July 1923.

Chamber of Princes and without any consultation with the people of his own State. The Nabha incident was a lesson in high-handedness intended to be conveyed to all Princes in India at a time when there was strong agitation for responsible government throughout the land. The bright side of Monarchy would shine forth only if the Ruler were to realise that his power was based on his responsibility to the people. Most of the Princes, enjoying British support, were unwilling to establish responsible government for fear that they would fall from power. According to one school of thought,¹⁴ a political organisation on the model of the Indian National Congress was necessary to change the British policy of keeping the Princes as slaves so that they would no longer be dry leaves to fall to the ground at an angry breath of an alien Government.

The Maharaja could in theory appoint the Dewans or remove them from office but practically they were appointed for definite periods, as lent from British Indian Service. Those who did not care for any extension of service considered themselves little responsible to the Maharaja. Such an extension was possible only with the consent of the British who thus really pulled the political strings through such favoured Dawans. Normally the insistence that the Maharaja's decision should be based on the advice of the Dewan would be the first step towards the goal of democracy; but it would be an anomaly if a Maharaja who would defy the British by acting against the advice of the Dewan favoured by them was ever to be considered constitutional. Evidently the Dewan could not tender any advice to the Maharaja except in conformity with the views of the British Resident and the curtailment of the power of interference of the latter would be a progressive step in the direction of responsible government.

The press and the platform continued to demand for months the establishment of an Executive Council responsible to the Legislature. There was a lurking hope that the Maharani Regent would commemorate the period of her rule by conceding the popular demand. The demand was not for an Executive Council as in Mysore which, at public expense, would only strengthen the bureaucratic hierarchy numerically but really for a body dependent for its tenure of office on the will of a majority in the Legislature. It had however to be considered that even in British India such a consummation had not been realised at that time in spite of continuous struggle for nearly forty years. The administration of Travancore had been monopolised by a small section of the community and the basis of its improvement, it was felt, was its handling by those in intimate touch with the pressing problems of the State and in sympathy with the progressive aspirations of the local people.

14. *The Sree Vazhumkode*, Quilon, 22 September, 1923.

The demand for responsible government tended to get sharper as the then Dewan, Mr. T. Raghaviah, failed to cultivate the popular sentiments. His suspected favouritism that seemed to violate the principles of natural justice in administrative service was strongly resented in certain quarters. He was accused of having made himself the leader of a section with vested interests rather than the dignified head of all classes of people in a progressive State. No wrong can be effectively righted except by the strenuous efforts of its victims; and the people of the State naturally tried to get rid of one-man autocracy. Thus personal, communal and constitutional issues got inextricably mixed with one another and began to flow forth as a raging river.

There were uncontradicted reports that the deputation of *savarna* leaders who had approached the Dewan in November, 1924, in connection with the Satyagraha at Vaikom was mildly rebuked by him for their officiousness in having interviewed the Maharani Regent in the first instance. He was also reported to be apparently annoyed at the condescension of the sovereign in receiving the deputation though its members were her loyal subjects only. His words were attributed by a few persons to the frenzy of a man with provokable temperament but there were others who found in them that subtle diplomacy which used to hold "Travancore in reserve for trial of mediocre talents in the art of government."¹⁵ The Dewan's attitude would become clearer if one were to consider it in conjunction with a fruitless attempt that he was reported to have been making to prevent officers, other than those of the highest grade, from paying their respects to the Maharani Regent. This attempt was interpreted as a veiled effort to keep the Ruler out of touch with her subjects and assail her customary freedom to contact them. The Maharani Regent was reported to have set her face against the Dewan's innovation and decided to enrich her store of public information through personal interviews with all those who sought them. The Dewan's political philosophy appeared to be that while he conceded the Sovereign's prerogative to appoint her Minister he would stress that her responsibility for administration would cease the moment the choice was made. Many felt that his first address to the Popular Assembly in which there was an aggressive emphasis on the first person singular was evidently an indication of the advent of one into the State who believed in the "absolute ownership of administrative powers."¹⁶

It was originally thought that Mr. Raghaviah had a burning desire to surpass his predecessor, Mr. M. Krishnan Nair, a cautious

15. *The People*, Trivandrum, 15 December 1924.

16. *Ibid.*

Dewan, in effecting administrative improvements. He was also responsible for the induction of a liberalised Legislative Council in the State. But his impulsive nature seems to have spoilt his intentions. He was very much upset in 1921 by the demonstration of students at Trivandrum which, he ventured to declare, was the result of the machinations of some mischief-makers. Emotionally disturbed, he was perhaps unable to see things in their proper perspective; he could express no sympathy with the victims, no regret at the unhappy happenings, connected with the students' strike; he unfortunately antagonised the people who vegetated for some time in frustrated resentment. On account of his land revenue policy, it was stated, several surveyed *Puduval* lands remained undisposed of and unsought for in the different Taluks. In the field of finance he levied additional impositions, affecting the rich and the poor alike, without adducing any justification for them and spent away the surplus earned by his predecessor. No material improvement was noticeable in the working of the various Departments. The policy appeared to be one of general drift which prevented him from executing his promises given earlier. It was even given out that he was exploiting Travancore for his own purpose, having suppressed her "buoyancy" and let loose a policy of favouritism.¹⁷ Whatever might have been his ability or experience as an administrator he became unpopular and his policy was suspected. His regime therefore, negatively contributed to the constitutional progress of the State in as much as the political leaders began to think of replacing it by a system of responsible government.

On the demise of Sri Mulam Tirunal Maharaja it was rumoured that a Council of Regency would be constituted. The leaders of Trivandrum who met in the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall on 20 August 1924 protested against the proposal¹⁸ as such a Council would impair the internal autonomy of the State and take away "the halo of sanctity surrounding the throne."¹⁹ A resolution demanding the establishment of a responsible Executive Council was passed at the meeting.

In January, 1925 the Government reduced the rate of travelling allowance of the Members of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.²⁰ They felt that the reduction of their status to that of second grade

17. *The People*, dated 15 and 22 December 1924.

18. The meeting was presided over by Mr. P. N. Narayana Pillai.

19. Speech of Mr. A. Hoogwerf on 20 August 1924.

20. File No. 900/1925—Correspondence with Mr. Cotton regarding incidents at the twenty-first session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

officers was derogatory to their dignity and decided to participate no longer in the work of the Assembly until the redress of their grievances. The Members protested against the invidious distinction shown in the matter of status between the Members of the Legislative Council and those of the Assembly. The Dewan however explained to the Members that throughout the existence of the popular Assembly the distinction had been maintained between the rate of travelling allowances of the Members of that body and that of the Members of the Council and therefore there was nothing new to involve any insinuation as imagined by the Members. The Government, he added, regarded both the Chambers with equal respect though they were differently constituted and the revision of the travelling allowances did not necessarily imply any lowering of the status. Anyway the matter at that time was one that disturbed the popular mind to some extent.

Another point around which popular dissatisfaction clustered was the announcement of the retirement of the Dewan, Mr. Watts,^{20a} and of the appointment of Mr. V. S. Subramania Iyer, Judge, High Court of Travancore, as his successor in office. Leading articles had been written in the press and representations made praying for the extension of the former's service at least for the completion of several useful projects initiated by him. The Members of the Legislature too had requested the Maharani Regent to retain him as Dewan for some more time. The nomination of the successor, two months in advance of the date of his retirement, was interpreted as an insult not only to Mr. Watts but also the accredited representatives of the people.²¹ It was not the fault of the individuals so much as that of the system of personal rule and the people became all the more aware that the only remedy lay in agitating for responsible government on a liberal and popular

20a. Mr. Watts had been the Dewan of Travancore from 23 June, 1925 to 23 June, 1929. His appointment, says Mr. O. M. Thomas, had been "a recognition of an infeasible civic right till then cruelly denied to a large class of the children of the soil, whose only crime is their varying theology". He was a "namby-pamby, shilly-shallying sort of man" with good intentions, "accessible, kind, considerate", but often he could not "make up his mind". He allowed himself "to be the sport of conflicting views and rival disputants". While Mr. Raghaviah, with his tenacious grasp and thorough execution, was strong but not sympathetic, "Mr. Watts is sympathetic, but not strong. Raghaviah respected public opinion by flouting it; Mr. Watts flouts public opinion by respecting it. Raghaviah revelled in swimming up the stream; Mr. Watts floats with the current and gets into the eddy....." *Under the Knife*, pp. 29-37.

21. File No. C. 790. Service dated 14 May 1929.

foundation. While it was true that in British India autocracy prevailed to a large extent in disguised form it continued in all its nakedness in the Princely States. It was felt that the News Paper Regulation of 1926 was mainly due to the absence of a Government responsible to the people.

With the increasing political consciousness of the people even the students started organisational work to help the Indian National Congress as far as possible. They decided to form an Association at Trivandrum the activities of which were under the close watch of the Government.²²

The Investiture Ceremony of Balarama Varma Maharaja at the end of the period of Regency came off on 6 November, 1931, when he announced that it would be his endeavour to enable the State "to take its place in the vanguard of progress." He decided to avail himself of the services Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, "a trusted friend of my family as my Legal and Constitutional Adviser." The Maharaja felt that the trust reposed in himself by the people would not be well discharged "except to the extent that I am able to promote the peace, contentment and prosperity of my subjects."

In 1932 the Government made an announcement regarding the reform, consistent with popular demand, of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.²³ At that time it contained one hundred Members, all of them being non-officials, while the Travancore Legislative Council consisted of fifty Members of whom thirty-five were non-officials. The franchise for the Council was low while that for the Assembly, the larger body, stood very high.²⁴ There were similar anomalies in the composition and functions of both these bodies. So the reform was to be effected not as a separate measure but as part of an organic whole. Special attention was to be paid to the general trend of reforms in other parts of India as well as other countries, with a constitutional machinery of government. The Government's aim was to secure adequate representation for all interests and points of view and fit the machinery of State administration into the scheme of Indian federation then under contemplation. The Government appreciated very much the advantages of bicameralism for Travancore. The revision of the legislative procedure and the enlargement of the powers of the two Legislative Chambers also were contemplated.

22. File No. 737. Letter from the District Magistrate, Trivandrum to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated 18 August 1931.

23. File No. 914/1932. Press communique, 2 June, 1932.

24. Persons paying an annual land tax of Rs. 5 and above and all graduates were eligible to be voters as regards the Council but an annual payment of not less than Rs. 50 by way of land tax was insisted on as qualification for voters as regards the Assembly.

Thus on 28 October, 1932 was passed the Legislative Reforms Regulation, intended to place the popular Assembly on a statutory basis with enlarged powers and functions and to so amend the law relating to the Legislative Council that both the Assembly and the Council would in future function as the two Chambers of a Legislature, thus providing for the increasing association of the people with the Government. The new reform came into force with effect from 1 January 1933.

In this way, Travancore came to have a bicameral Legislature.^{24a} A Bill could be passed only when it was agreed to by both the Chambers, without amendment or with such amendments as might be agreed to by both.

The Upper House, the Sri Chitra State Council, would consist of Members, nominated and elected in accordance with rules to be made under the regulation. Twenty-two out of its thirty-seven Members were to be elected; ten of the fifteen nominated Members would be officials. Provision was made for increasing the total number of Members, if necessary in future, and also for varying the proportion of the classes of Members in such a way that not less than fifty-five per cent of the Members of the Council should be elected Members and not more than one-third of the Members should be officials. The Government could nominate two additional Members with special knowledge or experience of the subject matter of Bills introduced in the Council and during the period for which they were nominated they would enjoy all the rights of the regular Members of the Council. The Dewan, the ex-officio President of the Council, could appoint a Chairman from among the Members of the Council to preside in his place when necessary. The Dewan could also address the House and require the attendance of the Members for that purpose.

In the Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly, the Lower House, consisting of seventy-two Members, there were to be sixty non-official Members of whom not less than forty-eight were to be elected. The number of nominated Members should not be more than twenty-four of whom twelve were to be officials. The total number of Members might be increased in future but at least 65 per cent should be elected Members and eighty per cent non-official

24a. The Viceroy of India laid the foundation stone of the new Legislative Chamber on 12 December, 1933. The Maharaja on that occasion said that the new reform "is the largest measure of association of the people of an Indian State with its Government and also represents a definite step towards the realisation of the federal idea". He hoped that the new Legislature would "keep the Government in close touch with sane and instructed public opinion". (D. Dis. 4347/44/LCS.)

Members. As in the Council, in the Assembly also the Government could nominate two additional Members for the consideration of any Bill, who would have all the privileges of regular Members. The Dewan, President of the Assembly, enjoyed the right to address that body and in the absence the Deputy President, a Member of the Assembly to be elected by the same House and approved by the Government, would preside.²⁵

Both the Chambers could be jointly addressed by the Dewan. Their life was four years from the first meeting. This period could be extended by the Government under special circumstances or either Chamber might be dissolved earlier. The mode of determination of questions by either Chamber was prescribed by the Reforms Regulation, as well as the disqualification of the Members.²⁶ Provision might be made by rules under the Regulation as to the term of office of the nominated Members in both the Chambers, the conditions and the manner of their nomination, the qualification of the electors, the method of election, the formation of constituencies and the conduct of legislative business.

The bicameral Legislature so constituted was forbidden to discuss matters relating to the Ruling Family and the management of Royal Household; relations with the paramount Power or foreign Princes or States; matters governed by treaties, conventions or agreements concluded or to be yet made, and the provisions of the Reforms Regulation and the rules to be framed thereunder. With-

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25. The salary of the Deputy President was to be fixed by the Assembly with the concurrence of the Government. He could be removed from office by a vote of the Assembly, again with the concurrence of the Government.
 26. Questions before the Council would be decided by a majority of votes of Members present including the presiding authority who, in case of a tie, would have a second or casting vote. In the Assembly, the presiding authority was not included who would yet have a casting vote in case of a tie. Questions before the Joint Committee of both Houses would be decided by a clear majority of not less than five.

An official was not eligible for election as Member of either Chamber. When any non-official Member accepted office under Government, his seat would become vacant in either Chamber. If a Member of one Chamber became a Member of the other one, his seat in the first House would fall vacant. If one was elected as a Member in both the Houses, he could indicate his preference for either body in which case his seat in the other Chamber would be declared vacant. Any official Member of either Chamber could address the other one, without, however, the right to vote in the latter.

out the written sanction of the Dewan, the Legislature could enact no measure regarding either the military forces including the Nair Brigade and Royal Body Guard or the Devaswoms. None could, without the Dewan's consent, initiate any measure in either Chamber relating to public revenues, religion and customary usages, and the repeal or amendment of certain laws in force. If either Chamber were to refuse to pass a measure in a form recommended by the Government, the Dewan could yet certify that its passage was essential in public interest.

The franchise for the Lower House was extended to **those men and women who paid land tax of Rs. 5 or more or income tax or municipal tax of Re. 1 or more. Graduates of any recognised University as well as retired or pensioned military officers residing in the State were also entitled to vote.** As regards the Council, the franchise followed mainly the heads of qualifications for that relating to the Assembly but it was fixed on a higher standard, namely the payment of land tax of Rs. 25 or more.

There was provision for the reservation of seats in general constituencies for Ezhavas, Muslims and Latin Catholics so as to assure their representation by election.

The Lower House apparently exercised some financial control over the Government so far as the State budget was prepared in **consultation with a Financial Committee consisting of a majority of non-officials elected by the Legislature.** Both the Chambers had **to vote on the budget before the Government incurred any expenditure.** They could sanction excess demands in the form of supplementary grants. The Legislature enjoyed of course the power of law-making, besides the right to interpellate and move resolutions on matters of general interest. There was freedom of speech subject to the limitations mentioned earlier. It was claimed by the authorities that thus in 1932 "a substantial measure of constitutional advance was **introduced in the State. No Legislature in any other Indian State exercises greater powers over such a wide range of subjects as in Travancore.**"²⁸

Local Self-Government had been making steady progress²⁹ in Travancore and several Village Panchayats had been constituted

27. In August 1936 the franchise was further widened and every person, paying land tax of Re. 1 or more and income tax or municipal tax, however small, was made eligible to vote. The voting strength was raised from 3 to nearly 12 per cent of the population.

28. No. D.Dis. 1883/44 Cs dated 3-7-1944.

29. There were 17 Municipal bodies, composed of a majority of elected non-officials.

under a Regulation of 1925. A few Committees and Boards also were functioning which associated the citizens with the administration.³⁰ The people thus steadily gathered more political training and experience which only sharpened the edge of their demand for a constitutional government in the State.

The Reform effected in 1932 failed to evoke positive response both from the classes and the masses. It was not commensurate with their hopes and expectations. The general opinion in the press was that it did not record any substantial constitutional progress. It only served the limited purpose of providing increasing association of the people with State administration and of placing the Popular Assembly on a statutory basis with enlarged functions and powers. The legislative functions of the old Council were now transferred in considerable measure to the Assembly but with this transfer "the rights exercised by the people through that representative institution have been considerably curtailed."³¹ The old Council could pass legislative measures unhampered by extraneous checks, but the introduction of bicameralism was considered to be a negation of powers formerly enjoyed so far as the Second Chamber could throw out any measure instituted by the First. From this stand-point the new Reform was looked upon as a retrogressive measure rather than an advance in the substantial devolution of the Sovereign's power of legislation on the representatives of the people. Unless there was such a devolution any Reform was bound to be a camouflage. The new Reform practically conferred on the representative institutions delegation of legislative power in no measure greater than what had already been given earlier. In the absence of such further delegation of legislative power, the creation of a Second Chamber could be construed only as an attempt to stifle popular expression. The Legislature, practically without any vital function so far except as an advisory body, was now rendered doubly impotent by the safeguard of a Second Chamber. The institution of Monarchy itself might have been sufficient safeguard against hasty legislation so far as the conferment of a portion of the legislative function of the Sovereign did not really imply any restriction of the royal prerogative to legislate, independent of the Legislature, and the

30. There were Economic Development Board, Board of Agriculture, Irrigation Board and Education Advisory Board, besides others. These bodies made recommendations on administrative measures affecting the Departments of national welfare.

31. Report on the constitutional aspect of the new Reform prepared by the Sub-Committee appointed at the meeting of Christians resident in Trivandrum, dated 25 November, 1932. It was signed by Messrs. S. I. Satyanesan, A. J. John and K. T. Thomas.

Sovereign also retained the right of veto. The introduction of bicameralism under these conditions was considered as a reactionary step.

As regards the issue of responsible Government the new Reform did not take any step in further rendering the Executive dependent on the Legislature. There was not even a faint recognition of the principle. In fact the new measure pointed in the direction of greater centralisation of powers and the subservience of the Legislature to the Executive. This was the most serious flaw in the new Reforms which rendered them an empty show.

Both the Houses, constituted on the feudal theory of franchise, represented only the propertied class and were not representative of other distinct interests in society. From this view-point also the constitution of the Upper Chamber would appear to be superfluous. The provision for the determination of all questions by a majority of votes of the Members present in the Council coupled with that for a second or casting vote for the President in case of a tie considerably strengthened the position of the Government in that Chamber which might therefore give effective expression only to the will of the Executive. The Executive could practically control legislation or ignore Bills passed or refuse assent to them. In short the new Reform might stifle popular voice and make the Legislature echo the official voice. The provision made for the reconciliation of disputes between the two Houses also was unsatisfactory. They were to be referred to a Joint Committee with an equal number of Members from both the Chambers in spite of their numerical disparity; they would be selected from them and not elected by them. In the Joint Committee, the decision as in the Council would be made by a majority of votes of the Members present including the Dewan, the presiding authority. Such a decision in the Joint Committee would be deemed as that of the Legislature. In short, in spite of the popular will expressed in the Assembly the Executive could yet default it by methods "recognised in and sanctioned by law."

Another anomaly was the provision relating to the quorum. It was lowered in the Assembly and raised in the Council.³² Thus practically the official Members of the Assembly would themselves constitute the quorum while not all of them might be necessary to constitute the quorum in the Council. The official Members were

32. In the old Council the presence of 15 or 30 per cent of the House was considered necessary for the exercise of its functions. According to that proportion the quorum for the Assembly should have been 22 whereas it was reduced to 12 or 16½ per cent. In the same manner the quorum in the Council should have been fixed at 6 but it was raised to 10 or 27 per cent of the House.

enabled to work the constitution without the concurrence of the popular representatives. This ingenious safeguard, in defiance of popular rights, was unnecessary as the Sovereign could reserve to himself the power of legislation.

Yet another flaw calling for adverse comment was the provision in the Regulation for the office of Deputy President of the Assembly. His salary was dependent on the concurrence of the Executive though it might be fixed by the Assembly. Under such circumstances as might be provided for by rules, the Dewan could ask any one in the panel of Chairmen drawn from among the Members of the Assembly to preside over a session, in spite of the presence of the Deputy President in the Chamber if it should prove embarrassing to the Executive. In short the Deputy President was at the dictates of the Dewan and his election by the House might be voted by the Government. He should be clever enough to chase with the hound and run with the hare and if his election were to be vetoed, the Assembly could not exercise its elementary power to re-elect him. The removal of the Deputy President, on losing the confidence of the House, demanded not only a vote of no-confidence passed by the Assembly but also the concurrence of the Government who might continue him in office, if so disposed, against the wishes of the House. This amounted to a negation of responsibility of the Deputy President to the Assembly. His office at best appeared to be a functionless fifth wheel or a fashionable appendage to the House at public expense.

It was a defect of the new reform that neither Chamber could consider or enact any measure affecting the provisions of the Regulation or the rules framed thereunder. The Reform, made on royal initiative was in exercise of the royal prerogative to legislate independent of anybody. But after it was enacted, creating two Houses of Legislature, it amounted to a confession of weakness and want of confidence to deny to either House the power to amend it or the rules to be framed under it. Any legislation by the two Chambers was only in the form of a recommendation to the Government and it was surprising that they were denied the right to express an opinion on the Regulation. While in 1922 the Legislature could amend the rules framed under the Regulation but not the latter, the new Reform of 1932 took away the rules also from the scope of power of the Legislature. The Regulation might be looked upon as a gift of the Sovereign to the people, lying outside the province of the Legislature but the removal of the rules to be framed by the Government from the purview of the Legislature seemed to be a "needless affirmation of the independence of the Executive and an attempt to establish by legislation its predominance over the Legislature."

The new reform was an effective attempt to centralise all powers in the Dewan. To make him President of both the Houses was to open a wide door for the Executive to carry out its irresponsible will under cover of sanction of a representative Legislature.³³ It provided "against the possibility of a convincing appeal to the Sovereign by the people against the domination of the Executive."

33. If both the Houses were to agree on an inconvenient measure the Dewan could refer it for consideration to a Joint Committee; he could return a Bill to a Chamber for reconsideration without giving the other House a chance to discuss it; or if confident of support in the latter body, he might allow it to nullify the effect of the vote of the other Chamber; when the Executive failed in both the Houses, the Dewan could achieve his purpose through a royal veto. As mentioned earlier, if the Chambers refused to pass a measure in the form recommended by the Government the Dewan could exercise his power of certification, upon which it could be placed on the Statute Book with royal assent. The Dewan, as President, could thwart the resolutions of both the Chambers and also re-affirm executive dominance over the Legislature by passing measures, irrespective of popular opposition. Where immediate legislation was deemed necessary he could submit to the Sovereign any Bill which, on receiving royal assent, would have the force of law for six months. In an emergency he could authorise expenditure without consulting the Legislature. In case of disputes, the Dewan's interpretation of the rules made under the Regulation would be final. He could avoid an adverse decision by the House on a motion for leave to introduce any Government Bill by directing its publication in the Government Gazette.

CHAPTER 27

THE ABSTENTION MOVEMENT

(The First Phase—1932-33)

Public life in Travancore had been dominated for a long period by the high caste Hindus who enjoyed the benefits of modern education and monopolised the Government offices. The custom-ridden society offered little scope for the backward communities to play a recognisable role in public life. Bereft of educational advantages and deprived of elementary privileges, they smarted under the social injustice and disabilities imposed on them by centuries of tradition.

With the spread of education and changes in the social conception of values and the growth of democracy, the backward communities broke the shackles of custom and became more and more conscious of their fundamental rights. They began to claim their legitimate share in the public services as well as adult franchise and proportionate representation in the Legislature. Their claims were pressed gradually. The press, public opinion and the impact of political forces outside the State helped their cause. Their march to progress, however, was not unhampered by vested interests in different forms. With the final realisation of their dreams, they were brought on a level with the privileged sections of society and the combined efforts of both culminated in the destruction of reaction and autocracy and the attainment of the goal of responsible Government.

The *Malayali Memorial* of 1891 was the first to point out the irregularities and inconsistencies in the matter of recruitment to the public services. The *Malayala Manorama* warned the Government then¹ that "irremediable losses might gradually happen to the State out of internal dissensions if the various communities in the State are not given due share in the service proportionate to the population of the communities." The *Malayali Memorial* however produced results favourable only to the privileged Nair community. While the Government of Cochin that comparatively adopted a highly conservative policy had little hesitation to appoint Christians to Government offices of any rank, the Government of Travancore continued to exclude them without justification from an important Department like Revenue Department and made the Ezhavas as well a pawn on the chess board. Even those who returned from England

1. Leading article in the issue dated 24 January, 1891.

with high qualifications got no preference and very few among the Syrian Christians found entry into the offices of higher grade."

The Civic Rights League took up the issue of equality of citizenship in Travancore and the agitation centred round the separation of the Revenue Department from the Devaswom Department and the opening of the former to all citizens, irrespective of caste or creed. The Government, under pressure, effected the separation of the two Departments in 1922 but the grievances regarding the recruitment to Government service persisted.

At the time of the visit of the Simon Commission Mr. C. V. Kunjuraman, General Secretary of the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* handed over to them on 26 May, 1928 a representation that enumerated the various disabilities from which the Ezhava community suffered at the time. He pointed out the need to retain communal representation and provide a separate electorate for the Ezhavas, apart from other backward communities."

2. Department	No. of offices	Syrian Christians
1. High Court	4	0
2. Zilla Court	7	0
3. Munsiff's Court	20	3
4. Government Advocates	5	1
5. First Class Magistrates	14	0
6. Trivandrum Government College	12	0
7. Trivandrum High School	6	1
8. District Schools	32	3
9. Malayalam Schools	74	0
10. Engineering Department	56	4
11. Medical Department	45	8
12. Huzoor Secretariat	19	0
13. Revenue Settlement	7	0
14. Survey Department	12	0
15. Tahsildars	29	0
16. Police Inspectors	49	0
17. Registrar	34	2
18. Agricultural Department	14	1
19. Salt Department	30	0

(*Malayala Manorama* dated 20 June, 1891).

- His argument was that though the Tiyyas of Malabar had advanced economically and educationally they still would have little chance of getting elected to the Madras Council as long as a high franchise was maintained and the prejudice against the low castes persisted in society. Numbering about a million they contributed so largely to the coffers of the State as to deserve special treatment. They should have either a separate electorate or an adequate number of seats reserved in the general electorate. It might be better, he suggested, to class them

The Ezhavas felt that it was on account of caste prejudices that they could not get seats in the Legislature at the general elections in Travancore. Several representations were sent by them to the Maharaja and the Dewan from time to time for the grant of adult franchise and the provision of seats. On 18 March, 1932 the Ezhava Members of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly submitted a memorial to the Dewan requesting the widening of franchise and the grant of adult suffrage, or otherwise, special electorate or joint electorate with reservation of seats for the Ezhavas, without prejudice to their right to contest the elections from general constituencies.⁴ On 31 July, 1932, the All-Travancore Ezhava Political League met under the presidentship of Mr. C. V. Kunjuraman and reiterated the demands noted above.⁵

The members of the Wajanathul Muhammadiya Association met on 21 August, 1932 under the presidentship of Saheb Bahadur Sayed M. Bava. Their view was that a separate electorate should be provided for the Muslim community in the proposed reconstitution of the Legislative Chambers. At the same time they wanted the recognition of the right of the Muslims to contest elections and vote in the general constituencies.

The Travancore Latin Christian *Mahajana Sabha* presented a memorial to the Maharaja on 4 September, 1932 regarding the

among the depressed classes and constitute a communal electorate for the composite community throughout the Madras Presidency. Such a measure would make them loyal to the Government to whom they would be a source of strength. He also recommended the adoption of adult franchise in the immediate future to enable the masses to have their legitimate share in the administration and to prevent the passing of the governmental powers into the hands of an exclusive high caste oligarchy, indifferent to the claims of the backward communities. If the proposal of separate electorate was not acceptable, the lowering of the franchise should be favourably considered. Otherwise the principle of nomination must be accepted in order to give representation to the Thiyya community as well as to check the "vagaries of the non-official groups". The Thiyyas, faithful and trust-worthy should be recruited in adequate number to the public services and the Government should not "pander to the whims of the political agitator and the Council politician." This memorial, reactionary and anti-national though it was, was probably a counsel of utter despair, reflecting the depth of feeling that the low castes entertained against the higher castes who had powerful vested interests in the administration and public life of the State.

4. Memorial from Ezhava Members of the Popular Assembly dated 18 March, 1932.
5. Resolution at the meeting of the Ezhava Political League, dated 31 July, 1932.

proposed constitutional Reform. They (Latin Christians) desired to return their representatives to the Legislative Chambers, proposed to be reconstituted, in proportion to their numerical strength. They wanted adult franchise, if possible, or at least reduced property qualification for the voters. They could not in the past return a single representative to the Legislative Council as they were mostly traders, artisans and skilled workmen while the franchise was based on property qualification. The finding of the Lothian Committee that adult suffrage would be administratively unmanageable in India should not, they requested, be made applicable to Travancore, with her compactness, social and national advancement and high level of literacy. At least the existing franchise should be widened by devising new principles so as to enfranchise the same proportion of voters from all communities including the Latin Christian community. In the interests of national coherence, the Latin Christians did not press for communal electorate but they demanded reservation of seats in joint electorates as well as multi-member constituencies; the single-member constituency system, if proposed to be continued, should be so arranged as to give numerical importance to the Latin Christians.

The Travancore State Catholic Congress submitted a memorial to the Maharaja on 15 October, 1932. They pleaded for joint electorates with reservation of seats based on population and also for the division of Travancore into nearly twenty-two multi-member constituencies. Under such a system, they felt, communal rivalries, if any, would be confined to the representative body and not broadcast, with disastrous results, among the masses.

The following table clearly indicates the cause and nature of the grievances entertained by some of the unrepresented and under-represented communities in Travancore:—

Years	1922	1925	1928	1931
Total number of Members to be returned by open election to the Popular Assembly.	23	23	23	23
Christians	7	7	6	4
Ezhavas	0	0	0	0
Muslims	0	0	1	0
Nairs	12	13	14	15
Other caste Hindus	4	3	2	3
Backward communities	0	0	0	1

The constitutional Reforms announced on 28 October, 1932 failed to satisfy the political aspirations of the Ezhavas who from their experience in the past naturally thought that they could not get into either House by means of popular election. An Ezhava *Mahajana* Conference was held under the auspices of the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* at Alleppey on 27 November, 1932, under the presidentship of Mr. K. Ayyappan. The conference recorded its disapproval of the new constitutional Reforms⁶ and formed a committee to chalk out the future programme of action in concert with other communal organisations.

The Catholics of Travancore had their own grievances regarding their representation in the public services.⁷ In point of education, population and land holding they occupied an important position in society. Yet their representation continued to be inadequate in the services in spite of discussions in the Legislature, resolutions passed at various public meetings and memorials submitted to the Government from time to time. The Catholics, perhaps, held the lowest number of appointments in the services. The Latin Catholics vehemently protested against the restriction of franchise to the payment of land tax without any regard for literacy and other qualifications, the Government's reluctance to allow reservation of seats and the delimitation of the constituencies as single-member ones resulting in the over-representation of caste Hindus in general. The voting strength of the latter was so much that it tilted the balance against the collective voting strength of the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims. The complaint of the Latin Catholics was that while the Government recognised the undoubted

6. The conference demanded reservation of seats in the Assembly and in the Council for the Ezhavas.
7. Memorial submitted by them under the leadership of Mr. Thariyathu Kunji Thommen to Mr. T. Austin, Dewan. (Confidential file No. 1126/1933). The following details are referred to in it:

Community	Population (1931)	Appointments held
Nairs	8,68,411	13,384
Non-Malayala Brahmins	54,141	2,833
Ezhavas	8,69,863	912
Muslims	3,53,274	609
Catholics	8,09,390	923
Marthomites	14,2,486	960
Protestants	2,08,725	658
Jacobites	3,37,872	1,353
Etc.	Etc.	Etc.

fact of social divisions in Travancore based on sectional interests they did not provide for the presentation of those interests by means of reservation of seats⁸

The political unrest in Travancore had thus its origin in the constitutional Reforms of 1932. The Ezhavas, the Muslims and Christians of all sections had looked forward to proportionate distribution of seats in the Legislature but the new Reforms little satisfied their expectations.

The Ezhava Political League met at Quilon on 5 November, 1932 to protest against the injustice done by the Government. Next day the Executive Committee of the State Catholic Congress recorded their protest at Kottayam. This was followed by the protests of the All-Travancore Muslim Service League and the Latin Christian *Mahajana Sabha*. There was also a public meeting of the Christians at Trivandrum in which Rao Bahadur A. M. Muthunayagam Pillai, Rao Bahadur P. I. Verghese, Dr. Thomas Mathew and Mr. K. C. Mamman Mappillai participated. The Ezhavas, the Muslims and the Christians decided to send deputations to wait on the Dewan for representing their grievances. But the Government's attitude was indifferent.

On 21 November, 1932, the Christians of all denominations resident in Trivandrum met and appointed two Sub-Committees to study the political effects of the new Regulation and the electorate rules foreshadowed in the Government communique appended to the Regulation. It was recommended that the system of general electorate should be retained as the creation of communal electorates would be detrimental to national solidarity and that adequate reservation of seats on the basis of population alone would ensure the just representation of the neglected communities like the Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims." The advocacy of adult suffrage was

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8. The second All-Travancore Latin Christian Conference was held at Trivandrum on 14th May, 1935 in which Rao Bahadur A. M. Muthunayagam Pillai, formerly Judge of the High Court of Travancore and Dewan Bahadur P. C. Lobo participated. For Mr. Lobo's address see the *Madras Mail* dated 18 May, 1935 (No. D. Dis. 339/48[CS]). He referred to the fact that an oligarchy accounting for only 17 per cent of the population, supreme in the army, powerful in the Devaswom Department and dominant in the public services, was able to entrench itself in a predominant position in the Legislature as well.
 9. The Sub-Committee that studied the representative aspect consisted of Messrs. E. J. John, Joseph Kunju Padiyara and K. T. Thomas. The Sub-Committee reported that representation, to be effective, must be based on the numerical strength of the different communities. As the

not to be, in any sense, a ground to rule out the principle of reservation of seats. As long as conditions promoting communal discord in elections were allowed to continue the formation of popular parties on political lines was not likely to happen; but once the principle of reservation was accepted, the Christians felt, it would necessarily lead to such a healthy formation of political parties as had been rendered impossible by the introduction of single member constituencies. Any attempt made by the Government to exploit the communal spirit in elections would be detrimental to the interest of the State as a whole and the system of reservation, it was felt, would heal the wounds inflicted by communalism on the body politic and promote social solidarity, besides placing the services of the best and the most experienced men, irrespective of class or creed, at the disposal of the State. There was little meaning in making the Taluk population the deciding factor in the

Government had recognised the different communities as separate entities for various administrative purposes the same principle should be reasonably extended to representation in the Legislature as well. In fact the Government had reserved twelve seats in the Assembly for those communities that might fail to secure representation from the general constituencies and they had also accepted, to some extent, the principle of functional representation. Of course it would be ridiculous to give proportionate representation to communities which could not provide sufficiently literate or politically intelligent men. But such weakness of the backward communities should not be exploited to deprive even the literates of their legitimate claims. The Sub-Committee was of the view that Ezhavas might not succeed in returning any candidate from the general rural constituencies. Proportionate to their numerical strength, the Christian community was entitled to return nineteen Members to the Assembly and nine to the Council and on the same basis, the Nairs could claim only one-sixth of the 56 seats in the Assembly, by election or by nomination, and any favour extended to them would be only at the expense of the other communities. The Sub-Committee alleged that the electoral rolls had been manipulated for this purpose; again in certain parts, the Christians who were mostly mortgagees suffered because though they paid tax they did so in the names of the holders of the equity of redemption, mostly non-Christians. Even when the Christians acquired property from non-Christians, proper entries would not have been made in the revenue records. The Sub-Committee recommended that the single-member system should be replaced by multi-member constituency system providing for reservation of seats in a uniform manner.

allocation of seats while adult suffrage was ruled out of consideration. No consistent principle had been followed by the Government in the allocation of seats which was alleged to be arbitrary and unfair.¹⁰

It was subsequently decided that the different sections of the Christian community should join and organise themselves to protect their common interests. The All-Travancore Christian Political Conference was formed to get their political grievances remedied by the Government. The Travancore State Catholic Congress, the Latin Christian *Mahajana Sabha*, the Kerala Christian Service League and the South Travancore Indian Christian Association were actively associated with this Political Conference.

A deputation of the Christian Political Conference met the Dewan and presented to him a memorial¹¹ on 19 December, 1932.

10. Sub-Committee's report, dated 21 November, 1932. While Thiruvalla with a voting strength of 5746 was granted three seats, Kunnathunad with a voting strength of 6575 was allowed only two and Agastheeswaram with a voting strength of 9230, only one. Neyyatinkaral with a voting strength of 4780 got two seats, Moovatupuzha with a voting strength of 5402 was allowed only one. Such an allocation on the basis of single-member system was construed as communal favouritism shown by the Government.

As Mr. N. V. Joseph pointed out later, representation was given to the taluks, not according to their voting strength but population. Under the existing system the Ezhavas, Muslims, Latin Catholics, Protestants and Marthomites numbering more than twenty lakhs would have little chance of representation in either Chamber of Legislature.

11. The memorial was signed by Mr. E. J. John, President of the Christian Political Conference, Mr. I. C. Chacko, representative of the Travancore State Catholic Congress, Mr. W. De Netto who represented the Travancore Latin Christian *Mahajana Sabha*, Mr. James Fletcher, who represented the South Travancore Indian Christian Association and Mr. C. P. Thomas who represented the Kerala Christian Service League. They formed the personnel of the deputation. They pointed out that the adjustment of the electoral rolls then in force to the re-aligned constituencies would injure the Christian interests and that the reservation of seats in a joint electorate had commended itself to British Indian statesmanship as fair to all communities. The creation of double-member and single-member constituencies in different parts of the State was in such a manner as to favour the Nair community alone and handicap the Christians. The memorialists did not ask for any weightage against the more powerful section or for any separate electorate which would have retarded the democratic progress of the State.

Mr. E. J. John, the spokesman of the deputation, pointed out that the Christians formed nearly one-third of the total population but ever

The memorialists prayed for the reservation of seats in a joint electorate on population basis in order to avoid the continuance of communal vested interests but they were equally aware that such reservation was "not theoretically perfect as a democratic device." They felt that a half-way house of the kind was imperative under the conditions prevalent in Travancore and desired that "the foundation now laid should be such as to sustain a more national structure in the future."

An analysis of the results of the general elections since 1922 would reveal the predominance of the Nair community in the Legislature. The various sub-castes within the Nair community had been already fused together on progressive lines and they attained a social solidarity as never in the past. But within the Christian community, the various sections continued to chalk out their policies on their own separate lines. The Nairs, by tradition, dominated the official hierarchy in the State. The feudal theory of franchise persisted even after the Reforms of 1932 and practically only 2.89 per cent of the population in the State was enfranchised. This was grossly unsatisfactory in so far as 41 per cent of the male population and 17 per cent of the female population were literate. The principle of differential franchise qualification in favour of the unrepresented communities, though recommended by the Lothian Committee, had not been adopted by the Government of Travancore. The Christian community owned a large extent of land in Travancore but they could not take full advantage of the land tax qualification for franchise because many among them, who were mortgagees, had to pay the tax in the name of the mortgagers. Most of them again were tenants, along with the Ezhavas and the Muslims, with possession of agricultural holdings but this fact also did not help them in securing advantages. One cause for the dissatisfaction was that while land revenue formed only 17.6 per cent, excise and customs brought in merely 34.7 per cent of the total income of the State; the Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims pursuing industry and trade and contributing most to excise and customs revenue were ignored in the matter of franchise while the Nairs who owned land got all material advantages on account of the insistence on property qualification for suffrage. There was also the complaint that the hasty preparation of the electoral rolls had

since election by general constituencies had begun they never secured their due share of representation in the Legislature while the Ezhavas numbering 8.69 lakhs did not get a single seat by that form of election. The reservation of seats was the only practicable method of obliterating communal discord in the State which was favoured by the continuance of vested interests in the political field. No community should be permitted to labour under a galling sense of injustice.

led to several inconvenient omissions and incorrect entries. It was not possible to re-distribute the electoral areas in such a way as to provide enough constituencies for the hitherto unrepresented classes with a majority of voters in their communities. They cherished the grievance that they could extract little sympathy from the different branches of administration which were apparently dominated at the time by the Nair community. In the promulgation of the new Reforms the Government had not ascertained the wishes of the public or consulted the Legislative Council.

On 17 December, 1932, the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim organisations met together in the London Mission Society Hall at Trivandrum to concert measures jointly for achieving their political goal. It was thus that the All-Travancore Joint Political Conference came into being.

A deputation of the Joint Political Conference submitted a memorial to the Dewan on 9 January, 1933.¹² It was a warning that the published electoral rules would only accentuate communal bitterness in the State and prevent the formation of parties on political lines. From the results of the four elections previously held it would be obvious that but for the nominations made by the Government more than half of the population of the State might have gone unrepresented. The possibility of representation by nomination should be in no sense an adequate compensation for that by election in a democracy. The memorialists were of the view that the non-official seats in the Assembly should not be filled up by nomination, but thrown open for election in general rural multi-member constituencies with adequate reservation for the considerable communities; the same principle of reservation should be made applicable to the State Council also. The principle of reservation had been accepted by the British Prime Minister's Communal Award, the Allahabad Unity Conference and the Poona Pact. Mr. N. V. Joseph, spokesman of the deputation, pointed out that Travancore was witnessing the clash of two principles, the existing exigency

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12. Mr. N. V. Joseph, President of the Travancore State Catholic Congress, was the spokesman of the deputation which included Messrs. C. V. Kunjuran, Thariyathu Kunji Thomman, Abdul Rahiman Saheb, K. M. Kesavan, Saheb Bahadur P. K. Kunju, K. T. Thomas, E. P. Varughese, K. C. Eapen and James Fletcher. The memorial was submitted on behalf of the S.N.D.P. *Yogam*, the Wajanathul Muhammadiya Association, the All-Travancore Muslim Service League, the Hidayathul Islamic *Sabha*, the Travancore State Catholic Congress, the Latin Christian *Mahajana Sabha*, the South Travancore Indian Christian Association, the Kerala Christian Service League and the All-Travancore Christian Political Conference.

of communal aspirations and the developing tendency of territorial nationality which influenced political action in contemporary British India. He added that an adjustment between the two, leading to social harmony, would be possible in Travancore only by the reservation of seats on communal lines in joint electorates for it would train the electors to consider the intrinsic merits of the candidates, apart from their communal claims, and neutralise the inequalities caused by territorial electorates and restricted franchise.

The Government suggested the holding of a Round Table Conference¹³ to consider the re-grouping of the constituencies of the Assembly and the Council. This suggestion was interpreted as an admission, by the Government, of the unfair nature of the grouping of the constituencies. But the political leaders demanded the widening of the scope of such conference before they could think of co-operating with it.¹⁴

On 25 January, 1933 the representatives of the constituent organisations of the All-Travancore Joint Political Conference met in the L.M.S. Hall at Trivandrum and passed the important resolution on abstention, among others.¹⁵

It stated:

Whereas the reformed Legislative Bodies of Travancore notwithstanding the promise of wide franchise and adequate representation of the various interests in the State made in the communique that has announced these Reforms and in spite of the definite demands of the different communities represented in this conference for a Reform safeguarding the interests of all these communities in the matter of representation in the Legislature have made the position of all these communities worse and have created in the State an unjust and undue class predominance of one community;

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13. Government Letter No. ROC. 112|32|Pol. dated 14 January, 1933, addressed to N. V. Joseph.
 14. Letter from N. V. Joseph to the Chief Secretary to the Government dated 19 January, 1933.
 15. The resolution, moved by Mr. P. A. Abraham, was supported by Messrs. C. V. Kunjuraman, A. C. Kuriakose, C. Kesavan, E. P. Varghese, James Fletcher, Thariyathu Kunji Thommen, Kochukora Tharakan, P. E. Abraham, Saheb Bahadur P. K. Kunju, Saheb Bahadur Pitcha Bava Sahib and P. S. Muhammed.

Whereas after the promulgation of these Reforms these communities jointly and singly brought to the notice of the Government their great grievances as regards the electoral system foreshadowed in the communique;

Whereas the reply promised by the Dewan to the deputation of this Joint Conference has not yet been received though this Conference has waited long;

Whereas there are indications and grounds to believe that the Government do not propose to consider any of the demands of this Conference;

Whereas this Conference feel convinced that no re-grouping of the constituencies alone which the Government seem to contemplate can do justice to all the communities in the matter of representation;

Whereas in the considered opinion of this Conference reservation of seats on population basis for the various considerable communities in joint multi-member territorial constituencies is the only remedy to safeguard the interests of the various communities concerned and to alleviate communal bitterness and eradicate communal ill-feeling in the present conditions of Travancore;

Whereas a duty is cast on this Conference to express its opinion as to the future stand these communities should take in this matter; and

Whereas this Conference is of opinion that no useful purpose will be served if only a few members of these communities manage to get into the Legislature;

This Conference of the delegates of the various political organisations of the Christian, Ezhava and the Muslim communities and of the members of these communities should abstain¹⁹ from taking part either by voting or by standing as candidates in the elections or by accepting nominations to the reformed Legislative bodies so long as the Government do not make

16. The Malayalam word *nivarthanam* (Abstention) seems to have been coined by Mr. I. C. Chacko in order to make the movement distinct from the Non-Co-operation Movement. (Article by Mr. M. M. Varkey in the *Malabar Mail* dated 25 November, 1962.)

provision for the representation by election of all considerable communities proportionate to their population in the Legislature.

The Government, in a press note issued on 27 January, 1933, adhered to the view that population could not be treated as the deciding factor for fixing the number of seats for the various communities as long as franchise was mainly based on property qualification and adult franchise was not granted. They also pointed out that the reservation of seats for such a large number of communities as in Travancore would make it impossible to adjust the necessary territorial extent of the constituencies. They thought that "the one remarkable feature of the new scheme of Reforms will be the elimination of the chances of any particular community becoming predominant in the Legislature, and that the proposed adjustment of the electorates would give the Christians a reasonably fair share of representation. They proposed to nominate the Ezhava and the Muslim members to the seats reserved for nomination and also devised a system of facultative representation for the special benefit of the deserving communities. Anyway the scheme of the Round Table Conference fell through and the Government started to draft the election rules on the lines laid down on 29 October, 1932.

The Government pointed out that the Joint Political Conference did not take into consideration the "Depressed Class Christians;" the Christian leaders felt that as such a community was not known to Christianity, the Government's intention was perhaps to spread the impression that the Joint Political Conference was not sufficiently comprehensive or representative and that the agitation was sponsored purely by the Syrian Christians. The Government's view was that under section 6 (2) of the Legislative Reforms Regulation, twelve out of the sixty non-official seats should be filled by nomination and so the demand for opening all the sixty seats to election would be against the Regulation.¹⁷ This argument did not hold water so far as there were seventy-two Members in all in the Assembly, including twelve officials, and the Regulation only stated that the number of non-officials should be sixty, of whom not less than forty-eight were to be elected and of whom not more than 24 were to be nominated. The Government's objection was incomprehensible "unless the words 'less' and 'more' used therein" were taken "to mean just their opposites." The Christian viewpoint was that there are distinct communities among the Christians as among the Hindus who would not function as one body or even

17. Reply of the Joint Political Conference to the Government, dated 13 February, 1933.

as auxiliary bodies in elections. Constitutional provisions were not to be based on calculations of possible electoral alliances and the facultative representation provided for by the Government would only bring into existence rival organisations leading to communal dissension.

The Council was not distinct in character from the Legislative Assembly but only a copy of it, though on a higher franchise. Granting that the Second Chamber was necessary, the Joint Political Conference wanted proportionate representation in that body also lest the balance of communal composition should be upset. They did not accept the Government's proposition that the new Reforms might be given a fair trial and that proper changes could be effected on the basis of experience gained.¹⁸ They claimed that they were "fighting against this octopus of communalism although we have the misfortune to appear communalistic in our demand." They added that they could not "but abstain from the Legislature until provision is made by Government for the representation of all the communities in proportion to their populations in the Legislature. The euphemism of the arguments and their plausibility in comparison with the politics of European countries where castes do not exist do not deceive us at all Nothing is farther from our thought than to non-co-operate with the Government of our country and then try to bring it under ridicule..... The term, non-co-operation, has been deliberately omitted in the resolution with a view to dissociate our attitude from what it has come to mean in the light of the recent events in British India".

The Government published a revised list of constituencies on 6 February, 1933 but the Joint Political Conference did not make any comment on it as they could not get at the correct figures of the relative voting strength of the different communities in each constituency.

The Abstention Movement that soon began had as its ultimate objective the securing of places in the Legislature and other representative institutions and public services in proportion to the population of the respective communities. A few newspapers and individuals ascribed the agitation to self-seeking politicians but its leaders tried to disprove such propaganda by organising demonstrations. The movement was bound to catch the interest of the masses when public meetings were held in different parts of Travancore.

18. This was because the Government had made no change in the representative system that worked from 1922 to 1931 even though the Ezhavas had been consistently complaining that they were not able to get into the Legislature at all.

The Government tried to create a split within the united party consisting of the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims who called themselves 'abstentionists' and later on adopted a policy of repression. From among the Members of the defunct Legislative Council they selected eleven persons belonging to different communities and the Dewan informally conferred with them early in March, 1933, apparently to dig the ground from under the feet of the Joint Political Conference. A scheme of representation was submitted by them to the Government¹⁹ "keeping the franchise as it was and allocating seats to different communities on population basis;" the number of general constituencies would be reduced and re-arranged in such a way that no particular community would get predominance and more seats could be set apart for facultative election. This scheme, however, was rejected by the Government.

It was inferred that the Dewan had, on 1 March, 1933, announced the Government's readiness to accept the principle of proportionate representation on the basis of population without any provision of reservation of seats and without any disturbance to the existing arrangement of franchise so that the preparation of fresh electoral rolls would be rendered unnecessary. On 14 March, the Government issued a communique promising adequate representation to the Ezhavas, Latin Catholics and Muslims.²⁰ The Joint Political Conference felt that the concessions promised by the Government to the Ezhavas and Muslims could not be practically realised by those communities under the electoral conditions prevalent at the time, apart from the fact that they fell far short of their numerical

19. Under the limitations prescribed by the Government they could not perhaps suggest a better scheme for securing proportionate representation without resorting to reservation of seats or extension of franchise. According to their scheme, seven seats would be allotted to the southern, ten to the central and fourteen to the northern divisions. The Joint Political Conference later on stated that the distribution of seats made in the scheme was substantially fair.

20. Four Ezhavas could be allowed to be returned by Ezhava Associations recognised by the Government; a Latin Catholic would be nominated by the Government; for the benefit of the Muslims, the Government might create the Alwaye constituency to be carved out of the Parur and Kunnathunad Taluks, over and above two nominations already promised. The Government proposed to raise the number of nominated non-official seats in the Assembly from 12 to 14 by reducing the number of nominated officials from 12 to 10.

strength.²¹ The concessions announced on 14 March registered no real advance beyond those already made. The Joint Political Conference pointed out that the claims of the protestants, numbering over three lakhs, for representation had been totally ignored. As regards the reduction in the number of official nominations and the increase in that of non-official nominations proposed by the Government, they were of the view that the seats so saved might not be made available to the large communities like the Ezhavas without doing violence to the right of representation of the Protestants, Brahmins or other communities to whom the Government had not yet made any definite promise regarding representation. Every community should be enabled to capture the proportionate number of seats unaided by any electoral alliance with other powerful communities.

On 24 March, 1933, Mr. T. Austin the Dewan, granted an interview to Messrs. T. J. Mathew, Mammen Mappillay and P. S. Muhammad. He promised²² to issue a supplementary communique announcing the Government's intention to give, as far as possible, all the communities representation in the Legislature proportionate to their population if any injustice were to result from the elections. It was pointed out to the Dewan that the distribution of seats already effected was unjust and that the Legislature should be dissolved, irrespective of the result of elections. At the desire of the Dewan a few members of the Executive Committee²³ of the Joint Political Conference met him on the next day after Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, Legal and Constitutional Adviser to the Maharaja, had already had a conversation with him. On this occasion the Dewan stated that the existing provisions regarding the franchise and the distribution of seats were substantially just and proper. This statement obviously indicated a change in the attitude of the Dewan which could not but be ascribed, under the circumstances, to the pressure exerted on him by Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer.

Thereupon the Executive Committee of the Joint Political Conference decided to submit a memorial to the Viceroy as regards

21. The Government's proposal was that the Nairs (8.68 lakhs) could get nineteen seats by election; the Christians (16.04 lakhs) sixteen seats by election and three by nomination; the Ezhavas (8.60 lakhs) two seats by election and four by nomination; and the Muslims (3.53 lakhs) one seat by election and two by nomination. (Reply of the Joint Political Conference to the Government, dated 25 March, 1933).

22. Statement of the Joint Political Conference dated 28 March, 1933.

23. Messrs. H. B. Mohammad Rowther, K. Mohammad Ali, K. M. Kesavan, C. Kesavan, K. P. Madhavan, Walsalam Rose, N. V. Joseph and K. T. Thomas were those who met the Dewan.

the legislative Reforms,²¹ publish a memorandum setting forth the grievances of the under-represented and unrepresented communities and constitute committees at Kottayam, Kayamkulam and Nagercoil to work out the abstention programme.

Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer was of the opinion that the constitutional Reforms already effected should be given a fair trial after which any serious injustice or inequality that might manifest itself could be examined and rectified. He believed that the new arrangement was "an advance on anything attempted in any part of Indian India."²² He did not recognise any distinction between abstention and non-co-operation. The "abstentionists" however pointed out that they never sought to paralyse the administration but only abstain from the general elections so long as their grievances remained unredressed. They would not hold meetings if they were to be declared unlawful and prohibited, or violate any law or order to be imposed by constituted authorities. They contended that the expression of their dissatisfaction in a constitutional way was not incompatible with their loyalty to the Maharaja. The Joint Political Conference, in an appeal to the people, declared that every "attempt at belittling the distinction maintained by the Joint Political Conference between abstention and non-co-operation should be scrupulously watched and tactfully avoided in time."²³

Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer's thesis was that in an Indian State, the Maharaja was, in theory and in practice the sole repository of all power, legislative and administrative; while in most of the States the monarchical principle was fully preserved a great deal of devolution of power had already taken place in Travancore and the new Reforms would certainly effect a larger measure of it if only they were given a fair trial.²⁴ He was also sure that the different communities would get as many seats as their leaders wanted who were perhaps "anxious not so much for an increase

24. The Executive Committee stated that they had contemplated only an appeal to the Viceroy though Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer stated later that they had thought of approaching the British Parliament and the Members of the Indian Legislature.

25. *Travancore: The Present Political Problem*, page 162.

26. Statement issued by the Working Committee of the All-Travancore Christian Political Conference dated 24 February, 1933.

27. The Joint Political Conference suspected that the Nairs might, on strategic considerations, withdraw their candidates in certain constituencies and give other communities a chance to be represented, merely to perpetuate the reformed electoral system, very much favourable to them.

in their own representation as for a decrease in the representation of certain other communities who have been for a long time wielding a great deal of influence in the State.²⁸ It was improper, Sir Ramaswamy Iyer said, on the part of a few leaders to approach the Members of the British Parliament and the Indian Legislature with their own political grievances "over and above the abstention programme which is but a transformation of the Non-Co-operation Movement."²⁹ The legislation of the British Parliament, he declared, could affect only British India and not the Princely States, a fact that had been made clear at the Round Table Conferences and also in the Viceroy's speech in the Chamber of Princes in 1933. The Government too in a press note issued on 2 April, 1933, stated that they "view with the utmost displeasure the continuation of agitation in this form" and made it clear that they would not "interfere with political agitation which is not of a subversive kind." Orders were issued by the District Magistrates of the different revenue divisions prohibiting meetings and demonstrations. But for such orders the affected communities might have held political meetings and re-affirmed their demands. Unless the predominance of favoured communities based upon feudal franchise and arbitrary delimitation of constituencies was reduced it was not clear how the legitimate political interests of other communities could be safeguarded. The Executive Committee of the Joint Political Conference made it clear that they accepted the franchise as fixed by the Government and resolved to abstain only until provision was made for proportionate representation of all the considerable communities.³⁰ They were immediately concerned only with the allocation of seats in the Legislature and not adult franchise or even responsible government. No talk of the grant of political freedom could be consistent with the prohibition of political assemblies or the cancellation of the licence of newspapers.³¹ Abstention never implied any attempt to paralyse the Government or any picketing of the polling booths or "anything suggestive of communal ill-will, violence or breach of public peace or disaffection" towards the Government. It was constitutional so far as it was a protest against the electoral Reforms imposed on the various communities against their wishes or interests and to that extent the repressive measures adopted by the Government constituted a negation of democratic rights.

28. Statement issued by Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, dated 30 March, 1933.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Press statement issued on 20 April, 1933 by the Executive Committee of the Joint Political Conference.

31. It was in this connection that the licence of the *Dasan* was cancelled. For details see the chapter on the *Government and the Press*.

The gist of the contention of the "abstentionists" was whether it was fair that forty lakhs of citizens would secure only thirty seats while eight lakhs could get as many as twenty-five seats in the Legislature. Communal electorate was dangerous, as pointed out by the Government, and there were also practical difficulties in reserving seats for all communities. It was essential that voters and candidates should be encouraged to think in terms of political or economic interests of the State rather than classes or communities. The domination of any particular community and communal separatism were both evils to be avoided at the same time. The *Hindu* of Madras advocated a negotiated settlement between the Government and the leaders of the discontented communities.³² The *Indian Express* stated³³ that continued neglect on the part of the Government to assuage discontent would, as in Alwar, accentuate the situation which might necessitate the employment of the armoured car. The method of the mailed fist might drive healthy movements underground and pave the way for periodical outbursts of popular fury. The prohibition of representations, said the paper, to the British Parliament and the Indian Legislature on the ground that they would deal with the Maharaja's relations with the King Emperor was a step devoid of tact and vision in the context of progressive constitutional developments in India.

The "abstentionists" held public meetings to express their dissatisfaction and educate public opinion. The famous resolution on abstention had already been approved at an extraordinary general meeting of the Catholic Congress held at Palai.³⁴ The Board of Directors of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* supported it, which was later ratified by an extraordinary general meeting of the *Yogam* held at Changanacherry on 14 March.³⁵ A mass meeting of the Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims was held at Tiruvalla and it also upheld the resolution.³⁶ After a meeting at Kottayam attended by more than 5000 citizens,³⁷ there was a bigger gathering at

32. The *Hindu*, dated 3 March, 1933.

33. The *Indian Express* dated 21 April, 1933.

34. It was attended by nearly 3000 Catholics and presided over by John Nidiry, the Vice-patron of the All-Kerala Catholic Congress.

35. K. Ayyappan presided over the meeting. Those present accepted the decision of the Joint Political Conference by a majority of 1491 against 9.

36. Mammen Verghese was in the chair on the occasion.

37. N. V. Joseph, President of the Travancore State Catholic Congress Presided over it.

Kozhencherry.³⁸ Other popular gatherings took place at Chengannur, Kottarakkara, Quilon, Kaipattur, Vaikom and other places, apart from Kalkulam in South Travancore.

The Government seems to have initiated the policy of repression with their prohibition of a meeting at Parur which was to have been presided over by Mr. C. Krishnan, Editor of the *Mitavadi* of Calicut, on 2 April, 1933.³⁹ The mass meetings disproved the argument of the Government and their supporters that the agitation was one sponsored by a few disaffected individuals. The crystallization of adverse public opinion might result in the "formation of a Legislature without any representative" from any of the aggrieved communities. Either the electoral rules might be revised or a new Legislature permitted to function that might distort the idea of representation itself. The ban on public meetings was applied at several places but there was no report of any defiance of law anywhere. The period of the prohibitory orders was extended further from the date of their expiry. The gagging of the mouth was accompanied by that of the press, in exercise of the powers conferred on the Government by the Newspaper Regulation.⁴⁰ The adoption of repressive measures, it was believed, was to prevent the contemplated submission of a memorial to the Viceroy which the Government looked upon as a subversive act.

38. Mr. A. C. Kuriakose, Secretary of the *Meenachil Taluk Samajam* presided over it.

39. Elaborate arrangements had been made for the meeting but on 1 April, an order of the District Magistrate of Kottayam was served on its promoters, prohibiting it under section 27 of the Travancore Police Regulation. The District Superintendent of Police arrived with a posse of armed police only to find that the birds had flown. No untoward incident happened.

As the *Hindu* observed on 6 April, it did "credit to the leaders of the Abstentionist Movement that, though the orders issued banning at the eleventh hour a conference for which they had made elaborate preparations at great cost and other considerable effort, were provocative they readily abided by the Government's desire and called off the function." Meetings of non-political character also seem to have come under the ban. Thus a meeting of the Catholic Young Men's Society at Kottarakkara was banned.

The District Magistrates of Quilon and Trivandrum also prohibited public meetings and even the distribution of pamphlets.

A proposed meeting at Mavelikkara also was called off.

40. The action taken against the *Dasan* has been described elsewhere. On 23 May the Government warned the Editor of the *Malayala Manorama* against "immoderate language" regarding the Abstention Movement. Though the Editor sought a clarification the Government did not oblige.

Having been denied freedom of expression in their own State, the Executive Committee of the Joint Political Conference met at Ernakulam in Cochin State on 20 April to discuss the general situation. On 12 May there was also the annual session of the Kerala Christian Service League at Ernakulam when it was decided to continue the agitation.⁴¹ On the same day the Kerala Muslim Youth Conference met at its annual session at Calicut⁴² when it was decided to approve of the Abstention Movement in Travancore and appeal to the Government to "desist from the policy of repression" "in the interests of justice and fairness." Next day the All-Kerala Muslim Conference also met at Calicut,⁴³ and a resolution was passed that "the claims advocated by the All-Travancore Joint Political Conference are just and based on sound political ideals." The All-Kerala Catholic Congress⁴⁴ holding its annual session at Ernakulam on 12 May, and the Ezhavas meeting at Ernakulam⁴⁵ on the next day harped upon the same theme.

The identification of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, Constitutional Adviser to the Maharaja, with the Reforms of 1932 and his suspected consideration for the Nair community caused the demand by the "abstentionists," of his removal from the service of the State. According to his own statement issued on 18 November, 1932, he had nothing to do with the internal administration in the State but only matters "relating to broad policy." The abstentionists however considered that his hand was visible in the internal affairs also, for he was receiving deputations and discussing public matters with them. His identification of 'abstention' with 'non-co-operation' and his allegation on 21 February, 1933, that the Abstention Movement was spearheaded only by a few individuals were interpreted as an attempt to mislead the public and cause a split within the ranks of the "abstentionists." His statement on Travancore's relations with the Paramount Power was commented on as unwarranted and mischievous. It was even alleged by certain sections that the Associated Press of India Agency in Trivandrum, established with a

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41. M. A. Chacko, Commissioner of Police and Commander of the State Brigade, Cochin, (Retd.) presided.
 42. It was presided over by Maulana Muhammad Yakub Hassan Sait (Madras.)
 43. It was presided over by Sir Mohamed Habibulla. The resolution was moved by K. K. Seethy Saheb of Tellicherry and seconded by K. Uppi Saheb.
 44. T. J. Mathew presided over the annual session which was attended by more than 5000 people from different parts of South India.
 45. K. Kunju Panicker presided over the meeting of the Ezhavas.

subsidy from the Government, was being utilised by him for the propagation of his own views and that he was giving secret encouragement to the Nair community, who enjoyed powerful vested interests in the State. The "abstentionists" looked upon him as the moving spirit behind the Government who would divide to rule and block any happy solution to the tangled problem of representation.

The ball of repression had started rolling on 1 April, 1933, on the eve of the departure of the Maharaja and party on European tour. Thereafter, the Government mobilised all their resources for repressing the Abstention Movement and for turning the tide of general election in their favour. The election turned out to be unique so far as no freedom of expression was tolerated during the period immediately preceding it. It was alleged that a large number of Government servants worked, with a common plan of action, to persuade several members of the dissatisfied communities to stand forth as candidates and get them elected to both the Houses of Legislature. The intention of the Government was to prove that the new Reforms already effected would satisfactorily give representation to all the considerable communities in the State. There was also the charge that the Government indulged in terrorism to compel the citizens to vote for the "anti-abstention candidates." It was alleged that Mr. B. Nanu Pillai, Commissioner of Police, camped at several places in Central Travancore organising and apparently influencing the elections. Though the constituencies were territorial the police was reported to have behaved as if some of them were ear-marked for particular communities and the Government's prestige would go down if no one therefrom entered the contest for election. An attempt was made to prevail on a few members of the dissatisfied communities to sponsor a movement against the "abstentionists" and subscribe to the Government's theory that the Reforms of 1932, satisfactory as they were, required no modification. They issued a manifesto specially appealing to the Syrian Christians in the State to support the Government. But it made little appeal to the masses. At the time when nominations were being received, those among the dissatisfied communities who had originally announced their candidature withdrew their names though the Government ultimately persuaded a few persons to give their nomination papers⁴⁶ in regard to both the Houses of Legislature.

46. Only one Muslim, three Ezhavas and fourteen Christians could be persuaded to contest the elections to the Assembly and a few others to the State Council. The Government received the nominations until 29 May. All but four candidates from the Nair community were persuaded by the Government to withdraw in favour of those from the dissatisfied communities.

The results of the general elections conducted under prohibitory orders may be tabulated thus:

Community	Population in Lakhs	Seats in the Legislature
		Assembly—48 } Council —22 } 70
Christians	16.04	10
Ezhavas	8.69	3
Nairs	8.68	36
Other caste Hindus	4.79	15
Muslims	3.53	3
Depressed classes	9.17	1
Europeans	(587)	2

Analysing the results recorded above the Executive Committee of the Joint Political Conference stated that none of those returned from the Christian, Ezhava or Muslim communities had been ever heard of in the public life of the State. On 25 August, 1933, they levelled, in a press statement, various charges against the Government officials concerned with the elections which however were not contradicted by the Government. Messrs. C. Kesavan N. V. Joseph and P. K. Kunju had worked intensely for the success of the Abstention Movement. It was clear that the two Chambers of Legislature, as newly constituted, were not representative of the major communities in the State.⁴⁷ It was a tragic irony that the constitutional Reforms of 1932, acclaimed as progressive, had to be worked out in an atmosphere of political mistrust, communal vilification, police shadowing, intimidation and the gagging of mouth.

47. To save the situation the Government nominated 4 Christians, 4 Ezhavas and 2 Muslims to the Assembly and one Christian, 2 Ezhavas and one Muslim to the Council. As regards the two Ezhava seats set apart for facultative representation, the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* refused to apply for recognition as a faculty.

CHAPTER 28

THE ABSTENTION MOVEMENT

(The Second Phase 1933-38)

After the elections were over in June, 1933 and the ban was lifted, several meetings were held¹ in different parts of Travancore and resolutions passed protesting against the unrepresentative character of the new Legislative Chambers and expressing lack of confidence in the Members, elected or nominated in contravention of the decision regarding abstention taken by the different accredited communal associations in the State. The Government was requested to dissolve the Legislature and reconstitute it, in order to secure proportionate representation. The official interference in the general elections was condemned, as well as the prohibitory order that had stifled freedom of expression. After the Executive Committee of the Joint Political Conference had levelled

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1. As the ban on the holding of public meetings was lifted the citizens of Meenachil decided, at a meeting held on 6 August, to accord a welcome to the Maharaja, returning to the State after his European tour. Other meetings were held at Thiruvalla, Chengannur, Chirayinkil and Thodupuzha. On the day on which the new Legislature was opened, the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim youths marked their protest through a fast undertaken by them. Criminal prosecution was launched against a few students at Trivandrum on the ground that they had harassed a Christian Member of the Assembly. The District Magistrate, Quilon, prohibited under section 127 of the Travancore Criminal Procedure Code, the publication of the *History of the Abstention Movement* in the *Kerala Sevakan*, the organ of the Kerala Christian Service League. The political leaders contended that this action amounted to a perversion of law so far as the ordinary law of the State was being applied for purposes for which it was never intended. At the same time, they pointed out, a "Nair paper" was publishing, with the Governments' connivance, several articles condemning the leaders of the Abstention Movement. The teaching licence of a few individuals was cancelled on political grounds, under section 61 of the Travancore Education Code. This section was intended to affect only those who indulged in political agitation against the Government. The "abstentionists" contended that they had never violated the law of the State but only represented some of the general grievances. Mr. K. George, Chief Secretary to the Government, was made the Land Revenue Commissioner against precedent and this was interpreted as a mark of the Government's hostile attitude towards the Christians.

their charges against the Government, the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* also met in its annual general session at Alleppey on 27 August and recorded its own protest. The absence, in the Legislature, of notable members from the aggrieved communities was conspicuous.

The inaugural meeting, on 31 July 1933, of the re-constituted Legislature was characterised by special protection extended to its Members from "passive demonstrations of popular disapproval." As the *Kesari* of Trivandrum observed:

Two "Houses of Legislature have been established to render futile the powers given to the old Legislature. Under the pretext of giving a wider representation the old restricted representation is maintained. The voters learn that the Members of the Assembly have been elected by them only after the candidates have been declared elected by the returning officers. Some become Members without voting, remaining under police protection for fear of the voters public servants induce many candidates to withdraw and put up new candidates Those who habitually vote only for candidates of their own community in the elections vote this time for candidates of other communities in order to defeat candidates of their own communities.....It is usual for voters to express joy on the occasion of the first meeting of the Legislature. But in Travancore on that day a large part of the population observed fasting and hartal. And the Government and the President received on the opening day of the Legislature resolutions of public meetings expressing no-confidence in the Members taking part in the session. The Members who have taken sides with the Government in the matter of constitutional Reforms are trying to form a National Party as representatives of the people, to oppose the Government, forgetting the inadequate representation of the Legislature of which they are Members.....That fact is that at no time in the near future there will be an opportunity, when owing to the imminent constitutional Reforms in British India a joint action of the public for self-government will be so successful as at present. We exhort that the people should immediately abandon their suicidal and the Government their ostich policy."

It is regrettable that at this stage communal tension rose high between the Nairs and the aggrieved communities. From a long-range view-point it represented perhaps an inevitable phase in the struggle for responsible government that involved necessarily an

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2. *Before the Government of Travancore submitted by M. M. Varkey to the Government.*

attack on vested interests supporting the reactionary system. "At no time in the history of Travancore" says Mr. C. Narayana Pillai, "did communalism stride like a colossus over the whole country and inflame baser passions and encourage fissiparous tendencies."³ At the Nair Conference held at Trivandrum in September, 1933 an appeal was made to all the members of the Nair community to try to maintain their predominant position in the Legislature and the public services. Speeches on different platforms only served to add to the intense communal bitterness⁴ which unfortunately poisoned, for a time, the mind of the youth in schools and colleges.

As the Government did nothing to remove the grievances regarding representation, the leaders of the Ezhava, Christian and Muslim communities finally decided to continue their agitation "by all constitutional means" and organise an All-Travancore Joint Political Congress. The movement, it was claimed was symbolic mere of grief at the Government's apathy than of a challenge and test of strength.

The objectives of the Joint Political Congress were to obtain representation in the Legislature, the public services and the army on the basis of population for all considerable communities, as well as adult franchise and responsible government. The Joint Political Congress was willing to stay all attempts at securing responsible government until the realisation of the demand for proportionate representation in the Legislature.⁵ The Executive Committee of this Congress resolved to press their demands also through memorials to the Dewan, the Maharaja and the Paramount Power in succession. They appointed a deputation⁶ consisting of seven members to wait on

3. *Life of Mr. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai* (Malayalam) by C. Narayana Pillai.

4. The Nair Conference was presided over by K. Narayana Menon and the Nair Youth Conference, by Malloor K. Govinda Pillai. Subsequently there was a meeting of the Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims at Ponkunnam with P. J. Sebastian in the chair and it was addressed by K. R. Narayanan. The meetings arranged to be held by the aggrieved communities at Palai and Changanacherry were prohibited by the District Magistrate of Kottayam. They naturally felt that the Government was indirectly helping the Nair community, granting its members freedom of expression that was denied to the other Communities. However Kesari Balakrishna Pillai, G. Raman Menon, Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai, G. Ramachandran, P. N. Krishna Pillai and A. Thanu Pillai rose high above the communal clouds and viewed the developments in the State from a political angle.

5. Letter from N. V. Joseph to the Dewan, dated 9 November, 1933.

6. Letter from E. P. Varghese to the Dewan, dated 11 October, 1933.

the Dewan with a memorial' to be submitted to him. The Dewan, however, was unwilling to receive any deputation "from the body in whose name you have written until they have publicly and without equivocation" renounced the policy of abstention.⁸ Thereupon Mr. N. V. Joseph, General Secretary of the Joint Political Congress, forwarded to the Dewan a copy of the memorial originally intended to be handed over to him in person. The Government took no action on the memorial.

Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy, planned to visit Travancore in December, 1933. It was when he had been Governor of Madras that the Devaswoms were separated from the Revenue Department in Travancore. He tried vehemently to crush the Non-Co-operation Movement that had been raging in British India. The "abstentionists" sincerely believed that the Government of Travancore had taken pains deliberately to identify the Abstention Movement in the State with the Non-Co-operation Movement in British India so as to convince the Viceroy of its "negative and subversive" character. Before his arrival, the Government decided to crush the movement. They

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7. The memorial referred to the repressive measures of the Government and the unrepresentative character of the re-constituted Legislature. It reminded the Government that the "abstentionists" had never proposed or practised any form of civil disobedience even when laws were enforced without justifiable cause for withholding some of the elementary rights of citizenship. None of them thought of withholding the payment of tax or wrecking the Legislature or placing obstacles in the normal functioning of the administration. The memorial gave details regarding the undemocratic manner in which the general elections were conducted. Out of the forty-three seats in the Assembly thrown open for election in general constituencies, twenty-five were secured by the Nair community and in the State Council they got ten out of sixteen such seats. The under-representation or non-representation of large sections of the people would be a negation of democracy. The memorial demanded the immediate dissolution of the Legislature, its re-constitution on the basis of proportionate representation for the considerable communities and the institution of an impartial enquiry into official conduct during the elections held in June, 1933. (See No. 1315/1933).
 8. From the Chief Secretary to E. P. Varghese, 26 October, 1933 (No. 148 C.S.). The Dewan also pointed out that the language of the memorial, already forwarded to him in advance, was "intemperate and disrespectful." N. V. Joseph in his reply dated 9 November, 1933 pointed out that he was only seeking redress against the highhanded acts of Government officials, which were specially enumerated in the memorial. "It is the right of the people," he added, "to bring their grievances to the notice of the head of the administration and his duty, to take action thereon."

served notice on the *Malayala Manorama* of Kottayam on 11 November, 1933 to show cause why legal action should not be taken against it for having supported the agitation. Messrs. N. V. Joseph, P. K. Kunju⁹ and C. Kesavan¹⁰ were placed under a gagging order.

It would appear that a few days prior to the Viceregal visit to the State, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer and Mr. T. Austin, Dewan, had stated that the Government was quite prepared to redress the political grievances if an approach would be made "in the proper spirit;" the political leaders were expected to announce the calling off of the Abstention Movement and their own readiness to appeal to the Maharaja rather than the Paramount Power for the satisfaction of their demands; and they were made to understand that the proceedings initiated against individuals and institutions would be dropped by the Government. Thereupon Mr. E. J. John, President of the Joint Political Congress, announced the cessation of the political agitation so as to create a proper atmosphere for a satisfactory settlement.

The "abstentionists" contended that the Christians, Ezhavas, and Muslims principally represented trade, commerce and Labour in the State and could not be satisfactorily represented by any single community that stood for landed interests; the movement to that extent served important social and economic interests. Moreover legislation of a religious character demanded a proper appreciation of the view-points of the communities affected. The composition of the Legislature, it was further argued, would influence the Government's policy regarding taxation and expenditure and it would be just that those items of expenditure as would benefit the trading, commercial and labouring classes were not starved. The extension of civic rights to all communities, after all, was the basis for the establishment of responsible government.

According to a statement issued by the Executive Committee of the Joint Political Congress¹¹ it would appear that on 22 October, 1933, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer had contacted Mr. E. J. Philipose to find a solution to the political problem. There was nothing for the leaders to renounce, it was felt, as regards the Abstention Movement which had "practically ceased" with the general elections in June, 1933. Subsequently Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer contracted Mr. C. P. Mathan at Madras and on 8 November Mr.

9. He was one of the Joint Secretaries of the Political Congress.

10. He was the General Secretary of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* as well as one of the Joint Secretaries of the Political Congress.

11. Statement issued on 2 July, 1934.

Philipose once again^{11a}. He wanted the leaders to state that abstention was only a temporary measure with reference to the general election and that they would approach the Maharaja for the redress of their grievances. He suggested the submission of a memorial in which all legitimate demands might be included except that for the dissolution of the Legislature lest there should be any impression that the Maharaja was acting under pressure. He wanted a declaration that the Abstention Movement had ceased and that there was no intention to go beyond the Maharaja. The leaders of the Abstention Movement met at Trivandrum on 12 November and authorised Messrs. Philippose and Mathan to continue the negotiation with Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer. They felt that the latter was motivated in this peace negotiation solely by "nervousness which grew in intensity at the time" of the Viceregal visit to Travancore and that he wanted to present the picture of a calm and contented Travancore to the Viceroy. It was true that the "abstentionists" had resolved in March, 1933, to submit a memorial to the Viceroy; after the Government refused in October to listen to their appeal they sought an interview with the Viceroy on 1 November but he regretted his inability to receive a deputation from them on account of "numerous engagements" and "pressure of work."¹²

It was under these circumstances that the aggrieved communities submitted a representation¹³ to the Maharaja on 7 December, 1933. They were happy about the choice of Sir Mohamed Habibulla as the next Dewan so far as the Maharaja was "the

11a. According to Mr. C. P. Mathen, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer had promised that in the Legislative Assembly (1) the Christians would be given by election at least as many seats as the Nairs (2) the Depressed class Christians, unable to get seats by election, would be given one or two seats by nomination and (3) the Ezhavas would be given not less than seven seats by election, and the Muslims not less than three by election C. P. Mathen: *I Have Borne Much*.

12. Letter from the Viceroy's House, dated 15 November 1933.

13. Memorial dated 7 December, 1933. It was signed by K. C. Mammen Mappillay, T. J. Mathew, E. P. Varghese, P. K. Kunju, C. Kesavan A. C. M. Anthraper, C. P. Mathen, P. I. Varghese, K. Thomas Mathew, E. J. Philippose, A. J. John, A. V. George, K. Mohammad Ali and T. M. Varghese. It was at this juncture that T. M. Varghese appeared on the political arena for the first time, his activities having been behind the curtain so far. The memorialists met the Maharaja at Pattom Palace but the reply that they received was disappointing.

Though the Dewan permitted only five members to go on deputation, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer asked Philippose to add as many members as possible, probably to commit them all to the undertaking.

first Sovereign of Travancore to appoint a member of the Muslim community as the Dewan of the State." They stated their grievances in regard to representation, already conveyed on several occasions in the past to the Government, and requested the Maharaja to grant proportionate representation and make the allotted number of seats available to the respective communities "solely by election and not by nomination." They prayed that action taken so far against individuals, institutions and newspapers as a result of the strained political relations should be dropped and all punishments cancelled; they also demanded in particular that the ranks in the army should be thrown open to all the subjects of Travancore, irrespective of caste or creed.

Even before the arrival of the Viceroy in Travancore several telegrams and representations had been sent to him regarding the political situation in the State.¹⁴ In his speech at Trivandrum, the Viceroy reminded the "abstentionists" that political and social progress in the State was a slow process and any radical change, intended to quicken it would only hinder the growth¹⁵ of the traditional system.

The "abstentionists" were expecting an immediate settlement of all out-standing issues, including the dissolution of the Legislature. Even after the Viceroy left the State on 12 December they continued to wait for the promised Government communique announcing a political settlement. Early in January, 1934, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer informed them that it would be better for them to wait for some more time until the arrival of Sir Mohamed Habibulla, the new Dewan. The Executive Committee of the Joint Political Congress felt¹⁶ that Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer was attempting to "impose on the aggrieved communities three years hence what the leaders had agreed to accept."

14. M. M. Varkey, then Editor of the *Yuvabharati*, was one among those who wrote a letter to the Viceroy explaining the political situation. (The *Malabar Mail* dated 25 November, 1962). Born in Mookancheril family near Trippunitura, he had become a journalist who would call a spade a spade.

15. The inequality in representation in Travancore, contended the "abstentionists", was the result of an arbitrary delimitation of constituencies. A Legislature, based on elected popular representation, was established only in 1922 and such a representative system could not be considered as deeply rooted in the past; any attempt to modify it for general satisfaction could not be interpreted as an effort to effect radical change.

16. Their statement dated 2 July, 1934.

The memorial submitted to the Maharaja on 7 December, 1933, was followed by another¹⁷ from the Joint Political Congress on 5 February, 1934.

The Joint Political Congress met on 30 January, 1934, at Tiruvalla under the presidentship of Mr. T. M. Varghese. He regretted that the Abstention Movement intended for the removal of certain disabilities had been characterised as seditious. Mr. Varghese had the capacity to reconcile what appeared to be irreconcilable elements and with his great sense of moderation and tact he was able to hold together forces which were pulling in different directions.

Sir Mohamed Habibulla became the Dewan of Travancore on 5 March, 1934. The "abstentionists" held high hopes about him for his reputation as a just administrator had reached Travancore earlier than he. He was soon to realise that the Dewanship would not prove to be a bed of roses. It was indeed a difficult exercise for him to steer clear of the pressure of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer and that of the "abstentionists." Anyway the Government did not give any assurance or make any satisfactory announcement as expected by the latter.

The Executive Committee of the Joint Political Congress interviewed the new Dewan at Munnar on 2 May, 1934, and submitted to him a memorial signed by eleven leaders representing

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17. This long document was signed by the office-bearers of the Executive Committee of the Joint Political Congress. Divided into four chapters, it gave a detailed account of the nature of administration in Travancore, the income and educational progress of the State and the various communities inhabiting it. It recalled the fact that the Government itself had implied in a communique issued on 29 October, 1932 that there were no political parties in the State and that the voting at the general elections would be on communal lines. As communal sympathies were often found to overstep the political boundaries, the Census Commissioner in 1932 had observed that for political purposes, caste or race would be more important than religion as the basis of classifying the population. The Brahmin predominance in the services was attacked by the *Malayali Memorial* of 1891 and succeeded by the ascendancy of the Nairs whose communal consciousness, newly awakened, led to an intensive social reform movement. Every caste or community thereafter came to have its own organised association for advancement in the socio-political sphere. While fortunately there was a fusion of sub-castes into a main community there was unfortunately also greater self-consciousness, apart from a sense of exclusiveness, among the main communities. It was pointed out that individuals could be united into a nation without the intervening agency of caste only when the inequalities inherited as a legacy from the past were removed.

the Ezhava, Christian and Muslim communities. They referred to some peace negotiations which were carried on earlier between Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer and Mr. T. Austin on one side and Messrs. C. P. Mathen and E. J. Philipose on the other.¹⁸ They also made the grave allegation that there was a breach of understanding on the part of the Government of Travancore. The main problem was to devise a franchise or method of election that would make the Legislature truly representative of the composition of the population. The contention of the Joint Political Congress was that even if they had contested the general elections the results would have been little different. When important modifications were possible in the electoral laws to accommodate the claims of the aggrieved communities it was clear that they should not be based merely on the goodwill of any particular section of the people but on well-considered principles.

The Muslim Service League met on 3 May 1934, at Kayamkulam where, the next day, the Joint Political Congress also met, with Mr. K. M. Kesavan in the chair. The Kerala Catholic Congress had their meeting at Alleppey on 13 May, 1934, with Mr. D'Souza in the chair.¹⁹ These conferences revealed the anxiety of the leaders of the aggrieved communities to find a solution to the political question.

The Government had re-constituted the electorates to meet partly the demands of the aggrieved communities who could have caught the opportunity and, after contesting the elections, demonstrated that their fear regarding the inadequacy of representation was absolutely justified. The extremists however stuck to abstention in principle though the moderate elements among the Ezhavas

18. In a press statement issued on 17 May, 1934, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer said that he had employed no agent to negotiate with the memorialists at any time. He had made no promise of concessions in case the "abstentionists" would not appeal to the Paramount Power. He added that no discussion would be possible so long as demands were put forward over the heads of the Maharaja and the Dewan and that the Munnar memorial contained "over-statements and inaccuracies." It was not practical politics to ask for such remedies, as for example, the immediate dissolution of the Legislature. (See also his press statement issued on 18 May). E. J. John, E. J. Philipose and C. P. Mathen gave their own replies to Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer's statement on 26, 29 and 30 May, respectively.

19. D'Souza was declared to be a State guest but no arrangement was made for his stay in Travancore. He had fixed an interview with the Junior Maharani but cancelled it by telegram on the ground that he was not given conveyance from Alleppey to Trivandrum.

and the Muslims broke away. They also cast their votes against such members of their communities who contested the elections in opposition to the policy of abstention and thus caused their defeat and later complained that the new Legislature, dominated by one community, was an unrepresentative body. As Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai correctly pointed out, "under the present arrangement no elected member really represents any community as such but only his constituency which is made up of all communities."²⁰ The decision of the abstentionists to appeal to the Paramount Power was a tactical blunder, for as far as possible the citizens in Princely States should have settled their problems internally, without the intervention of a foreign authority. It was regrettable that a few extremists among them lost sight of the fundamental issues or merits of the question and showed intemperance in condemning the preponderance of the Nair community. The Nairs also, at their annual conference at Trivandrum, used intemperate language, mindful of fancied temporary advantages and forgetful of their permanent interests. Instead of criticism cancelling out criticism, it only intensified for the time being the communal bitterness which emerged as the dark shadow of the freedom struggle.

Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai, then the leader of the Nationalist Party in the Assembly, and a few of his friends suggested the formation of a non-official committee to ascertain public opinion and frame proposals agreeable to all for submission to the Government. Mr. Pillai wanted an approach to problems with an open mind. He was against making the reservation of seats in the Legislature as a basis for discussion. But in spite of his efforts at settlement, no concrete solution seemed possible. It was unfortunate that there was a misunderstanding between Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer on one side and Messrs. E. J. John, E. J. Philipose and C. P. Mathen on the other regarding the tacit terms of the settlement in so far as the dissensions were really cutting up the country into conflicting elements. Even if one might ascribe impatience and political immaturity to the methods adopted by the "abstentionists", nobody could ever consider them unconstitutional because to abstain "from the Legislatures is a constitutional remedy open to any body of people who are agitating for redress of their grievances...It is regrettable that these principles of constitutional law were forgotten in dealing with the Abstention Movement. This attitude on the part of Government is fraught with danger to popular rights."²¹ The inadequacy of representa-

20. Pillai's statement, the *Hindu* dated 11 June, 1934.

21. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai's press statement. The *Hindu* dated 11 June 1934.

tion was most in evidence in the case of the Muslims and the Ezhavas; and as regards the Christians, they lost their chance of disproving the Government's position by their abstention and of showing that they secured their quota of seats only on the sufferance of the Government and the Nair community. As Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai pointed out, the influence of a community in the Legislature depended more on the character, integrity and ability of its representatives than mere number.²² The demand for the dissolution of the Legislature was not practicable. It was gratifying that the "abstentionists" did not press for it but only for an immediate re-adjustment of the electorates and a redistribution of franchise to satisfy their claims so that new rules could be framed in time for fresh election. A correct solution lay only in an enlarged franchise, especially during the infancy of democracy in Travancore. The leaders were soon to realise that they should not miss the wood while counting the trees and that their vision of responsible government should not be obstructed by a cloud of trivial issues.

Meanwhile some of the "abstentionists" used to enter Tangassery, a hamlet near Quilon and a British pocket, in order to escape from arrest by the Travancore police. There was an attempt to merge this area with Travancore in order to prevent such escapes in future. On 13 May, 1934 the people of Tangassery sent a memorial to the Viceroy protesting against such a proposal. Messrs. George Joseph, Bar-at-Law, and M. M. Varkey met the Governor of Madras as well as the Viceroy in this connection.

On 4 January, 1935 a memorandum had been submitted to the Government by the Joint Political Congress and in June, 1935 the Government passed orders on the issue of recruitment to the public services.²³ It was impracticable to give representation to

22. Pillai pointed out as an instance that the motion for repealing the reactionary Press Regulation of the Regency period could have been easily passed if only the Christian members in the Legislative Council had joined hands with the Nair members.
23. Order R.Dis. 893|Genl. dated 25 June 1935. The Government stated that their policy had always been to afford equality of opportunity to all classes without sacrificing efficiency. Even as early as 1915 the Heads of Departments had been requested to encourage the backward communities. After similar requests were made in 1917 and again in 1921, it was decided in 1924 to institute a thorough scrutiny into the methods of recruitment. As a result, in the Government order issued on 27 April, 1925, the communities in the State were classified into Brahmin; Nair; other caste Hindu; Christian; Ezhava; Muslim, and other classes. Quarterly reports also were called for from the Heads

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of Departments. A more elaborate classification of the Hindu and Christian communities was subsequently made. The Government pointed out that none would be eligible for admission to public service merely on the ground of belonging to a particular community, that equality of opportunity would be afforded to all and that, other things being equal, preference would be given to unrepresented and poorly represented sections provided they were well-defined unitary groups among whom there would be qualified hands. In August 1929 it was suggested that a Committee of Enquiry should be appointed to report on the system of public recruitment. Such a Committee was subsequently appointed, consisting of both officials and non-officials. (G.O.R.O.C. No. 7159 of 31|GL dated 22 December 1931). Besides V. Subba Iyer, who was appointed as Chairman in July, 1932, there were eleven members in the Committee. In their report submitted on 16 September, 1933 they recommended that as far as possible, unrepresented or inadequately represented communities should be given representation in the public services but the rules that they would formulate for achieving this purpose should be made applicable only to direct recruitment and not to promotions in service. The Chairman of the Committee was of the view that those successful in the competitive examination should be selected in the order of merit and recruited in the order of communal rotation to be fixed. The Committee resolved that appointments among the three religious communities "should be in proportion to their respective numerical strength." They worked out in detail the proportion of representation to be given to the various sections of the people in regard to all ministerial posts. As regards executive posts they resolved that selection should be determined by competitive examination or interview or both so that the best candidate in each community might be benefited. They also fixed the order of rotation for recruitment. The Committee next recommended the constitution of a Public Service Commission with an official President and five members for the State to advise the Government regarding the qualifications of candidates and the conditions of the competitive examinations and to prepare the list of candidates in accordance with the rules newly framed.

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The speeches subsequently made by C. Kesavan, K. R. Narayanan and V. K. Velayudhan on 20 May, 1935 were considered as likely to cause communal unrest and hatred towards the Government; the leaders were temporarily prohibited by the District Magistrate, Kottayam, from making any further speech in the District. The Government decided to prosecute C. Kesavan under section 117 of the Travancore Penal Code for his speech at Kozhencherry on the ground that it had excited contempt and feelings of disaffection towards the Government. The Sessions Judge at Quilon as well as the High Court rejected Kesavan's application for bail. He was sentenced²⁷ to two years' simple imprisonment and payment of a fine of Rs. 500.

26. In his challenging address, C. Kesavan made pointed reference to the monopoly in general administration enjoyed by the Nair community, condemned the policy of the Government and hinted at the decision of the Ezhavas to leave the Hindu fold.

27. C. Kesavan was arrested at Alleppey on 7 June, 1935. He was the General Secretary of the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* at the time. In a press statement on the eve of his arrest he said:

"The Government of Travancore have done me the honour of prosecuting me for sedition.....I long for the day when the shadow of caste Hindu monopoly is destroyed.....I want you to regard my arrest as a resounding victory or as a presage of the coming of the day when true equality will prevail among all the subjects ofthe Maharaja. It is no longer possible for the Government or the dominant monopolists to pretend that there is not a problem here to be solved. Nobody will believe that I who have made hundreds of speeches these two and a half years have suddenly lapsed into sedition; all that the prosecution means is that this movement for justice is getting irresistible.....I have not said a word to bring the

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In August, 1935, the Executive Committee of the Joint Political Congress expressed their satisfaction with the steps already taken by the Government, including the appointment of the Franchise and Delimitation Commissioner, to solve the tangled problem of representation in the Legislature with special reference to the Ezhava, Muslim and Latin Catholic communities who were guaranteed adequate representation. Though no definite assurance was thrown out to the Syrian Christians and the Christian groups of South Travancore, the Committee hoped that the Government's "generous and sincere intentions" would, in the hands of the Franchise and Delimitation Commissioner, "blossom into a perfect and harmonious whole"²⁹.....". The Committee "unhesitatingly" withdrew all attempts in furtherance of the programme of agitation to which they had been pledged. They also appealed to the Government to discontinue their repressive policy. They expected that a "magnificent edifice of a political party transcending communal limitations will evolve out of sustained effort and community of suffering which has marked the progress of agitation."³⁰

Government.....into hatred or contempt or to create any ill feeling amongst the several communities.....It is only a week ago that the Government issued a communique professing its readiness to settle the problems.....No negotiations can be sincere or genuine if the possible negotiators are prevented from having any part in the negotiations. The moral for my co-workers should be that they should win through and establish their birth-right.....not by negotiations but by persistent, unfailing and undaunted fidelity to the programme to which they stand pledged.....".

28. The famous Temple Entry Proclamation issued subsequently removed the disabilities of all low castes to a very great extent and with the formation of the Devaswom Board they got admission into the Devaswom Department as well. The S.N.D.P. Yogam and the All-Travancore Joint Political Congress had striven much to obtain such a satisfactory result. The efforts of Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai to secure communal harmony tended to lessen the tension gradually. E. V. Krishna Pillai supported his views in a series of articles written by him. It was being progressively realised that communal conflicts would only prolong the agony inflicted by autocratic rule.

29. Press statement issued after the meeting on 21 August, 1935.

30. *Ibid.*

The Joint Political Congress had viewed with considerable misgiving the intended appointment of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, hitherto Legal and Constitutional adviser to the Maharaja, as the Dewan of Travancore. He took up his duties as Dewan on 8 October, 1936. On 2 October, a deputation¹ of the Joint Political Congress waited on him to present a memorial containing grievances. Among the several points raised in it including the freedom of the press, electoral laws and caste discrimination, there was also the issue of the release of C. Kesavan from prison. But the Dewan pointed out that he had neither submitted any petition for mercy nor expressed any regret to the Government.

E. Subramania Iyer, Franchise and Delimitation Commissioner, submitted his report upon which the Government passed orders on 16 August, 1936. The franchise for the Assembly was

31. It consisted of T. M. Varghese, V. K. Velayudhan, P. J. Sebastian, P. K. Ahmad Kunju, K. Kunju Panicker, M. G. Mathew, K. T. Thomas, E. P. Varghese and M. S. Anirudhan.

Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer informed the members of the delegation that in no other Indian State did the press enjoy as many facilities as in Travancore; that there was no political prisoner in the State; and that there was no question of religious intolerance. The electoral reforms adumbrated during the days of his predecessor Sir Mohamed Habibulla would not, in the interests of continuity in administration, be whittled down under his own advice. He promised to look into specific instances, if any, of "silent persecution" and vengeance on any person or community on the part of the officers of the Government. He added that "the tone of the police is set by the public and by the impact of public opinion." He dismissed the charge made in the memorial that there was caste discrimination in the Secretariat. His aim was "not only to bring about equality of opportunity to all communities and classes but to strike at individual or personal bias by setting my face against recommendations and the exercise of influence through friends or relations or politically or socially influential people." He was happy that an effort was being made to reach an electoral understanding among the various communities in the matter of seats at the next elections. But he was against the use of religion as a means of securing political weightage and the Government would discourage all malicious propagandist activity in the matter of religion. The possible danger from the inculcation of religious doctrines in places where it would not be desirable to introduce sectarian teaching would be avoided and there was no question of encouraging one faith and discouraging another. He pointed out that in spite of the press law in Travancore there were nearly 120 newspapers and journals in the State and that it was less drastic than the one in British India or the one in Mysore.

extended to everyone who paid one rupee or more as tax. The Government decided to delimit the constituencies and appointed M. K. Nilakanta Iyer as Special Officer for preparing the voters' list. A deputation³² of the Nair Vigilance Committee submitted a memorial to the Dewan on 7 November, 1936 outlining their position regarding the new Reforms announced by the Government. The Nairs obviously were dissatisfied with the electoral arrangements made by the Government in 1935 to the satisfaction of the "abstentionists." But the Dewan informed the deputation that the new scheme should be given a fair trial before any change might be attempted to suit the claims and the position of the Nairs. The Government's idea, the Dewan explained, was "that as far as possible some system must be devised whereby communities, although they may differ and differ profoundly at this moment, may come together a little later and willingly give up all reservations and all ideas of separateness....." He advised the Nairs not to abstain from elections directly or indirectly but give the reforms a fair trial because, if the scheme were to be scrapped, a recrudescence of all that had happened would follow. The working of the system of single non-transferable vote and the new delimitation of constituencies would demonstrate by actual wear where the shoe might pinch. The suggestion of the Nairs to increase the number of elected seats by seven would imply the reduction, to that extent, of the number of nominated seats, to the detriment of communities who required protection and to whom representation by nomination had been promised.

As a result of the representations made to the Franchise Commissioner by the Joint Political Congress, the non-transferable single vote system, as noted above, was established. Provision had been made for the reservation of eight seats in the Legislative Assembly and two in the Council by election for the benefit of the Ezhavas; the Muslims and the Latin Christians also could get three seats each in the Assembly by means of reservation. In April, 1937, general elections³³ were held and all the eight Ezhava candidates for the Assembly and the two for the Council put up by the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* got elected. This was the first success obtained by the Ezhavas in getting entry into the Legislature by means of election.

32. The deputation consisted of M. K. Govinda Pillai, R. K. Krishna Pillai, A. Thanu Pillai, A. S. Damodaran Asan, K. Kunjukrishna Pillai and Puthupally S. Krishna Pillai.

33. T. M. Verghese, representing the Joint Political Congress, was opposed by K. Kumar who had participated in the Nagpur Flag Staff Satyagraha in the election contest at Pathanamthittai. The former was elected by a comfortable majority, and subsequently he was also elected as Deputy President of the Assembly.

The Executive Committee of the Joint Political Congress had, as early as 30 December, 1935, decided to submit a "Kesavan memorial" to the Dewan. Signatures were obtained on a mass scale and the memorial was submitted on 17 September, 1936. After his release from jail Mr. C. Kesavan was given a grand reception at Alleppey³⁴ and other places under the auspices of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* and the Joint Political Congress.

34. *Malayala Manorama* dated 5 October 1937. The meeting at Alleppey was presided over by K. C. Mammen Mappillai. On 15 November, 1937 there was a reception at Shertallai. Similar functions had been arranged at Trippunithura, Pathanamthittai and Kayamkulam. On 21 November 1937 the District Magistrate, Quilon prohibited under section 26 of the Police Regulation IV of 1095 the publication or circulation, in Quilon District, of the address presented to Kesavan by the Ezhava Young Men's Association at Shertallai as it contained "highly inflammatory" passages.

Later in the Legislative Assembly a no-confidence motion was introduced against T. M. Verghese, Deputy President, who had participated in the function at Alleppey and welcomed Kesavan on behalf of "fifty-one lakhs" of people in Travancore. The point at issue was whether he did so in his capacity as Deputy President or as a citizen and leader of the Joint Political Congress. Mr. Verghese protested that he did so in his private capacity. The House was not charitably disposed towards him and did not give him the benefit of doubt. The no-confidence motion was passed against him. This action put the hands of the clock back so far as the Deputy President would become a semi-official, a nominee of the Government, a "good boy" with no freedom of political action. According to a contemporary critic the debate was pitched in a very low tone, members being swayed by communal considerations and lost in a whirlpool of intrigues. It was said that Mr. Verghese hesitated between apologising and challenging. The Government by abstaining from voting allowed Mr. Verghese to rise to the dignity and by active participation pulled him down. It was a game of chess in which the astute player out-witted the novice. The Dewan's ruling that the comparison with the Deputy Speakers of the Provincial Assemblies was wrong was out of place. The logic in his statement that since the Congress was out to wreck the constitution, its conception of Deputy-Speakership was different from the accepted canon cannot be appreciated so far as one finds it difficult to reconcile his statement with his own former announcement that the Deputy-President should be a party man. C. P. Mathen observes, "the voice was indeed the voice of the Assembly but no one in the State was under any misapprehension as to whose hand it was." (*I Have Borne March*).

On 4 January, 1938, the *Joint Political Congress Party in the Legislature* submitted another memorial to the Dewan on the question of recruitment to the public services. They suggested certain modifications in the methods of recruitment as accepted by the Government on 25 June, 1936 so that the surviving grievances of the under-represented communities might be remedied.³⁵

The Joint Political Congress showed signs of weakness as months roled by. Mr. N. V. Joseph and Mr. E. P. Varghese resigned and withdrew their membership from the organisation. It was at this juncture that a meeting of the citizens of Trivandrum was convened on 16 February, 1938 when it was resolved to form an organisation for the protection of the interests of minorities and for the establishment of responsible government in the State. Another meeting was held on 23 February, 1938, at which the rules of the new organisation framed by the Drafting Committee were approved. It was thus that the Travancore State Congress was born. Its objective was to secure responsible government, adult franchise and protection for minorities through just and peaceful means.

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35. The deputation did not demand any radical change that might do violence to the existing scheme but only indicated certain deviations, desirable from their point of view. They suggested the retention of the classification of communities already adopted but demanded that in harmony with the spirit of the Temple Entry Proclamation, the Dewaswom Department should be thrown open to all the citizens in the State so far as all expenditure in connection with it was met from public funds. They pointed out the difficulties experienced by the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim communities in the matter of recruitment to the State Forces as well as the necessity for throwing open the Military Department to all subjects without any distinction. They also suggested certain amendments to the existing division of the public service into three categories, Higher, Intermediate and Lower, so as to prevent certain communal groups from having representation far in excess of their legitimate share on the basis of their numerical strength. They wanted the constitution of an Advisory Board consisting of the representatives of recognised communal groups, to be elected by the elected Members of particular communities in the Legislature. The Public Service Commissioner should publish quarterly statements showing the recommendations made by him and those accepted by the Government in the matter of appointments.

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The punishment given to C. Kesavan made the Ezhavas all the more determined to fight for the recognition of their rights. A section among them was even for embracing the Christian faith. The S.N.D.P. Yogam also supported²⁸ such a proposal at the meeting held on 20 May, 1935.

In August, 1935, the Executive Committee of the Joint Political Congress expressed their satisfaction with the steps already taken by the Government, including the appointment of the Franchise and Delimitation Commissioner, to solve the tangled problem of representation in the Legislature with special reference to the Ezhava, Muslim and Latin Catholic communities who were guaranteed adequate representation. Though no definite assurance was thrown out to the Syrian Christians and the Christian groups of South Travancore, the Committee hoped that the Government's "generous and sincere intentions" would, in the hands of the Franchise and Delimitation Commissioner, "blossom into a perfect and harmonious whole"²⁹.....". The Committee "unhesitatingly" withdrew all attempts in furtherance of the programme of agitation to which they had been pledged. They also appealed to the Government to discontinue their repressive policy. They expected that a "magnificent edifice of a political party transcending communal limitations will evolve out of sustained effort and community of suffering which has marked the progress of agitation."³⁰

Government.....into hatred or contempt or to create any ill feeling amongst the several communities.....It is only a week ago that the Government issued a communique professing its readiness to settle the problems.....No negotiations can be sincere or genuine if the possible negotiators are prevented from having any part in the negotiations. The moral for my co-workers should be that they should win through and establish their birth-right.....not by negotiations but by persistent, unfailing and undaunted fidelity to the programme to which they stand pledged.....".

28. The famous Temple Entry Proclamation issued subsequently removed the disabilities of all low castes to a very great extent and with the formation of the Devaswom Board they got admission into the Devaswom Department as well. The S.N.D.P. Yogam and the All-Travancore Joint Political Congress had striven much to obtain such a satisfactory result. The efforts of Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai to secure communal harmony tended to lessen the tension gradually. E. V. Krishna Pillai supported his views in a series of articles written by him. It was being progressively realised that communal conflicts would only prolong the agony inflicted by autocratic rule.
29. Press statement issued after the meeting on 21 August, 1935.
30. *Ibid.*

The Joint Political Congress had viewed with considerable misgiving the intended appointment of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, hitherto Legal and Constitutional adviser to the Maharaja, as the Dewan of Travancore. He took up his duties as Dewan on 8 October, 1936. On 2 October, a deputation³¹ of the Joint Political Congress waited on him to present a memorial containing grievances. Among the several points raised in it including the freedom of the press, electoral laws and caste discrimination, there was also the issue of the release of C. Kesavan from prison. But the Dewan pointed out that he had neither submitted any petition for mercy nor expressed any regret to the Government.

E. Subramania Iyer, Franchise and Delimitation Commissioner, submitted his report upon which the Government passed orders on 16 August, 1936. The franchise for the Assembly was

31. It consisted of T. M. Varghese, V. K. Velayudhan, P. J. Sebastian, P. K. Ahmad Kunju, K. Kunju Panicker, M. G. Mathew, K. T. Thomas, E. P. Varghese and M. S. Anirudhan.

Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer informed the members of the delegation that in no other Indian State did the press enjoy as many facilities as in Travancore; that there was no political prisoner in the State; and that there was no question of religious intolerance. The electoral reforms adumbrated during the days of his predecessor Sir Mohamed Habibulla would not, in the interests of continuity in administration, be whittled down under his own advice. He promised to look into specific instances, if any, of "silent persecution" and vengeance on any person or community on the part of the officers of the Government. He added that "the tone of the police is set by the public and by the impact of public opinion." He dismissed the charge made in the memorial that there was caste discrimination in the Secretariat. His aim was "not only to bring about equality of opportunity to all communities and classes but to strike at individual or personal bias by setting my face against recommendations and the exercise of influence through friends or relations or politically or socially influential people." He was happy that an effort was being made to reach an electoral understanding among the various communities in the matter of seats at the next elections. But he was against the use of religion as a means of securing political weightage and the Government would discourage all malicious propagandist activity in the matter of religion. The possible danger from the inculcation of religious doctrines in places where it would not be desirable to introduce sectarian teaching would be avoided and there was no question of encouraging one faith and discouraging another. He pointed out that in spite of the press law in Travancore there were nearly 120 newspapers and journals in the State and that it was less drastic than the one in British India or the one in Mysore.

extended to everyone who paid one rupee or more as tax. The Government decided to delimit the constituencies and appointed M. K. Nilakanta Iyer as Special Officer for preparing the voters' list. A deputation³² of the Nair Vigilance Committee submitted a memorial to the Dewan on 7 November, 1936 outlining their position regarding the new Reforms announced by the Government. The Nairs obviously were dissatisfied with the electoral arrangements made by the Government in 1935 to the satisfaction of the "abstentionists." But the Dewan informed the deputation that the new scheme should be given a fair trial before any change might be attempted to suit the claims and the position of the Nairs. The Government's idea, the Dewan explained, was "that as far as possible some system must be devised whereby communities, although they may differ and differ profoundly at this moment, may come together a little later and willingly give up all reservations and all ideas of separateness....." He advised the Nairs not to abstain from elections directly or indirectly but give the reforms a fair trial because, if the scheme were to be scrapped, a recrudescence of all that had happened would follow. The working of the system of single non-transferable vote and the new delimitation of constituencies would demonstrate by actual wear where the shoe might pinch. The suggestion of the Nairs to increase the number of elected seats by seven would imply the reduction, to that extent, of the number of nominated seats, to the detriment of communities who required protection and to whom representation by nomination had been promised.

As a result of the representations made to the Franchise Commissioner by the Joint Political Congress, the non-transferable single vote system, as noted above, was established. Provision had been made for the reservation of eight seats in the Legislative Assembly and two in the Council by election for the benefit of the Ezhavas; the Muslims and the Latin Christians also could get three seats each in the Assembly by means of reservation. In April, 1937, general elections³³ were held and all the eight Ezhava candidates for the Assembly and the two for the Council put up by the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* got elected. This was the first success obtained by the Ezhavas in getting entry into the Legislature by means of election.

32. The deputation consisted of M. K. Govinda Pillai, R. K. Krishna Pillai, A. Thanu Pillai, A. S. Damodaran Asan, K. Kunjukrishna Pillai and Puthupally S. Krishna Pillai.

33. T. M. Verghese, representing the Joint Political Congress, was opposed by K. Kumar who had participated in the Nagpur Flag Staff Satyagraha in the election contest at Pathanamthitta. The former was elected by a comfortable majority, and subsequently he was also elected as Deputy President of the Assembly.

The Executive Committee of the Joint Political Congress had, as early as 30 December, 1935, decided to submit a "Kesavan memorial" to the Dewan. Signatures were obtained on a mass scale and the memorial was submitted on 17 September, 1936. After his release from jail Mr. C. Kesavan was given a grand reception at Alleppey³⁴ and other places under the auspices of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* and the Joint Political Congress.

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34. *Malayala Manorama* dated 5 October 1937. The meeting at Alleppey was presided over by K. C. Mammen Mappillai. On 15 November, 1937 there was a reception at Shertallai. Similar functions had been arranged at Trippunithura, Pathanamthittai and Kayamkulam. On 21 November 1937 the District Magistrate, Quilon prohibited under section 26 of the Police Regulation IV of 1095 the publication or circulation, in Quilon District, of the address presented to Kesavan by the Ezhava Young Men's Association at Shertallai as it contained "highly inflammatory" passages.

Later in the Legislative Assembly a no-confidence motion was introduced against T. M. Verghese, Deputy President, who had participated in the function at Alleppey and welcomed Kesavan on behalf of "fifty-one lakhs" of people in Travancore. The point at issue was whether he did so in his capacity as Deputy President or as a citizen and leader of the Joint Political Congress. Mr. Verghese protested that he did so in his private capacity. The House was not charitably disposed towards him and did not give him the benefit of doubt. The no-confidence motion was passed against him. This action put the hands of the clock back so far as the Deputy President would become a semi-official, a nominee of the Government, a "good boy" with no freedom of political action. According to a contemporary critic the debate was pitched in a very low tone, members being swayed by communal considerations and lost in a whirlpool of intrigues. It was said that Mr. Verghese hesitated between apologising and challenging. The Government by abstaining from voting allowed Mr. Verghese to rise to the dignity and by active participation pulled him down. It was a game of chess in which the astute player out-witted the novice. The Dewan's ruling that the comparison with the Deputy Speakers of the Provincial Assemblies was wrong was out of place. The logic in his statement that since the Congress was out to wreck the constitution, its conception of Deputy-Speakership was different from the accepted canon cannot be appreciated so far as one finds it difficult to reconcile his statement with his own former announcement that the Deputy-President should be a party man. C. P. Mathen observes, "the voice was indeed the voice of the Assembly but no one in the State was under any misapprehension as to whose hand it was." (*I Have Borne March*).

On 4 January, 1938, the *Joint Political Congress Party in the Legislature* submitted another memorial to the Dewan on the question of recruitment to the public services. They suggested certain modifications in the methods of recruitment as accepted by the Government on 25 June, 1936 so that the surviving grievances of the under-represented communities might be remedied.³⁵

The Joint Political Congress showed signs of weakness as months roled by. Mr. N. V. Joseph and Mr. E. P. Varghese resigned and withdrew their membership from the organisation. It was at this juncture that a meeting of the citizens of Trivandrum was convened on 16 February, 1938 when it was resolved to form an organisation for the protection of the interests of minorities and for the establishment of responsible government in the State. Another meeting was held on 23 February, 1938, at which the rules of the new organisation framed by the Drafting Committee were approved. It was thus that the Travancore State Congress was born. Its objective was to secure responsible government, adult franchise and protection for minorities through just and peaceful means.

35. The deputation did not demand any radical change that might do violence to the existing scheme but only indicated certain deviations, desirable from their point of view. They suggested the retention of the classification of communities already adopted but demanded that in harmony with the spirit of the Temple Entry Proclamation, the Dewasvom Department should be thrown open to all the citizens in the State so far as all expenditure in connection with it was met from public funds. They pointed out the difficulties experienced by the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim communities in the matter of recruitment to the State Forces as well as the necessity for throwing open the Military Department to all subjects without any distinction. They also suggested certain amendments to the existing division of the public service into three categories, Higher, Intermediate and Lower, so as to prevent certain communal groups from having representation far in excess of their legitimate share on the basis of their numerical strength. They wanted the constitution of an Advisory Board consisting of the representatives of recognised communal groups, to be elected by the elected Members of particular communities in the Legislature. The Public Service Commissioner should publish quarterly statements showing the recommendations made by him and those accepted by the Government in the matter of appointments.

The deputation consisted of T. M. Verghese, A. J. John, M. S. Aniruddhan, E. John Philipposse, V. K. Velayudhan, P. K. Kunju and T. Kunji Thommen.

On 4 July 1938, the leaders of the Joint Political Congress met for the last time and resolved to dissolve that organisation. They decided that all the members of the body should join the Travancore State Congress.

The cry for a share in all branches of administration was thus transformed into a cry for responsible government in Travancore. The Abstention Movement, grossly communal in complexion, represented yet a challenge to vested interests in administration. Three communities, Ezhavas, Muslims and Christians, had combined in the struggle, in the course of which it was realised that the clash of communal forces would result only in the continuance of autocracy. The struggle to crush autocracy and establish responsible government now entered on its next phase. It became wider in scope and more progressive in its objective than ever before.

CHAPTER 29

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN COCHIN

Having traced the developments in Travancore, we may, in this chapter, trace the constitutional evolution in Cochin State. We have seen earlier how the Maharaja of Cochin who abdicated in 1914 had found it impossible to accept the advice of the Government of Madras in regard to the formation of a popular Representative Assembly in the State.

The Maharaja of Cochin was the source of all authority, the active exercise of which was entrusted to the various officers of the Government with the Dewan at the top. The Maharaja had treaty relations with the British and until 1923 conducted correspondence with the Government of Madras in matters relating to Cochin. After 1923 the State was in direct relation with the Government of India.

Prior to 1920, there was no special legislative machinery in Cochin State, though occasionally certain committees were appointed to help the Government in drafting Bills. Whenever the Dewan found it necessary to legislate on any subject he used to call upon the Government Advocate or any other officer to draft the necessary Bill which would be published in the Government Gazette to elicit public opinion. Subsequently the Dewan would revise the Bill in line with his own thinking and it would be enacted into law with the assent of the Maharaja. There were also laws passed in the form of Royal Proclamations. Anyway practically there was little scope for the association of the public with legislation.

In October, 1918 on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday the Maharaja of Cochin announced his intention to associate his people "more directly and formally" with the Government. That was the time when the British Government's policy in India had been declared to be the progressive realisation of responsible government. After he assumed office as the Dewan of Cochin, Mr. Vijayaraghavachari took up the question of constitutional Reform.

Meanwhile the *Cochin Mahajana Sabha*, a political party, had submitted a scheme of constitutional reform for the Government's consideration. After studying the scheme, the Dewan Peishkar expressed his opinion¹ that

"His Highness the Raja is the fountain source of all authority in the State—legislative, judicial and executive—and he is

1. Dewan Peishkar's Minute, 20 January, 1920.

responsible to the Paramount Power for the good administration of the country and her people. His Highness cannot therefore divest himself of any portion of his responsibility and transfer it to the representatives of the people in the manner in which it has been recently decided to be done in British India."

In the context of harmonious relations between the Maharaja and his subjects, the avenues available to the latter for presenting their grievances and the easy accessibility of the former to everyone without distinction, the Dewan Peishkar expressed the view that the existence of a representative organisation with legal status to make practical suggestions for the removal of the grievances of the public was a desideratum. Such an organisation would naturally come into close contact with every branch of administration and result in the gradual association of the people with the Government. It would propose new laws or amend the defects in existing ones, offer criticism and advice on legislative measures to be adopted by the Government, discuss financial statements and help the Government in distributing the allotments for various purposes. He suggested that the new body might be named *Cochin Rajya-bharana Sahayika Sabha*; it could be utilised as a medium through which the Government could explain their policy to the public and in which they could answer questions put by the Members, subject to qualifying restrictions.

The Dewan Peishkar also suggested the constitution of the Sabha or Assembly in which the elected non-officials would have a majority.² The Dewan would be its President for the first three years after which the Sabha could elect its own President subject to the Maharaja's approval. The inclusion of the Heads of Departments in the *Sabha* would enable the Government to explain their policy or answer the interpellations.³ In view of the high standard of

2. Out of the sixty Members, forty-eight (or 80 per cent) might be non-official and the remaining twelve (or 20 per cent) official. Of the forty-eight non-officials, forty (or 80 per cent) might be elected and the remaining eight nominated by the Government. This claimed the Dewan Peishkar, would give the popular representatives a majority far in excess of that proposed by the *Mahajana Sabha*.
3. The twelve officials would be the Heads of Departments namely (a) The Dewan Peishkar (b) The Director of Education (c) The Superintendent of Excise Revenue (d) The Chief Medical-Sanitary Officer (e) The Chief Engineer (f) The Conservator of Forests (g) The Superintendent of Police (h) The Comptroller of Accounts (i) The Superintendent of Devaswoms (j) The Superintendent of Agriculture and Fisheries (k) The Superintendent of Industries (l) The Government Advocate and Law Officer.

education and the absence of communal differences in the rural parts of the State, the Dewan Peishkar pointed out, in particular, that election "by communal representation will be an insult to the general intelligence and the awakening national spirit of the people of Cochin." It was significant, he added, that "the *Mahajana Sabha* has not proposed it and that in none of the criticisms that have so far appeared in public has there been a suggestion to provide for communal representations."

It was suggested that the entire State might be divided into forty electoral constituencies,¹ each returning an elected representative. The franchise² should be as broad as possible, characterised by the exercise of the right of vote by all the adult members in a family, including women.³ The eight non-official Members

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4. It was assumed that the population was ten lakhs and there would be a constituency for a population of 25,000. The Municipalities of Mattancherry, Ernakulam and Trichur would each form a constituency and the remaining thirty-seven seats could be allotted to the rural population, including Chittur-Tattamangalam. This was consistent with the desire of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee that the number of seats allotted to the rural population should be sufficiently large. The twenty Revenue Inspectors' Firkas in the State could be roughly divided into two constituencies each, except Kozhinjampara, Nemmara and Chowara for which three seats would be sufficient. A resident in a constituency for at least six months and above could contest the elections.
 5. Pattadars, paying land revenue assessment of Rs. 10 and more and all adult members in their families (above the age of 21); Sirkar Deva-sworn tenants paying a rent of Rs. 10 and above and adult members of their families; *Kanom* tenants with permanent occupancy rights paying land revenue assessment of Rs. 10 and more and the adult members of their families; all residents of Municipal Towns paying a tax of Rs. 5 and more to the Municipal Councils and the adult members of their families; and all the tenants of houses assessed at a monthly rental value of Rs. 5 and above and the adult members of their families would have the right to vote.
 6. It was realised that in regard to a big Marumakkatayam family paying land revenue to the State and consisting of educated members, it would be the denial of justice to the latter and benefit to the State if the head of the family in whose name generally the *Patta* would stand, alone were to be enfranchised. It was consistent with Cochin's place of honour in the matter of women's education that they too should be enfranchised. It may be remembered that under the new Government of India Act, the question of female franchise was left to be decided by the new Legislative Assembly.

to be nominated by the Government would represent "the minor interests" as Labour, Depressed Classes, Planters, Factories and the like. The organisation of Labour and the upholding of its interests were essential for the workers who were not getting at the time a decent wage from the landed proprietors or mill owners; as the Dewan Peishkar commented, there "is absolutely no reason why the labourers should not share the profit arising out of the high prices of cocoanut and paddy."⁷

The Dewan Peishkar further suggested that Standing Committees of non-official Members with special knowledge and experience might be constituted under the presidentship of the Heads of Departments to make recommendations for the consideration of the *Sabha* or Assembly.

It must be admitted that the Dewan Peishkar's proposals were conceived "in a far more liberal and democratic spirit than those now under contemplation in British India and those proposed by the *Mahajana Sabha* in the memorandum. When once we make up our mind to go in for a representative institution it should be done in the best and most democratic manner possible"⁸ The new proposals contained the enlightened principle of enfranchisement of the women of the State. Of course they were based on paternalistic principles of Governmental benevolence but were sufficiently indicative of a progressive stage in the evolution towards a fully constitutional or responsible government.

Later, as directed by the Maharaja, Mr. T. Vijayaraghavachari, the Dewan, prepared a Draft Proclamation for forming a Legislative Council in the State. This Proclamation left much of the substantive law and the whole of the adjective law to be laid down by rules to be newly framed. The Draft Proclamation was sent to the Government of Madras on 28 July, 1920 for their approval. The approval of the Legislative Council Proclamation by the Government of Madras was communicated to the Government of Cochin by the British Resident who however advised the postponement of the publication of the rules."

On 2 December, 1920, the Proclamation was finally issued.

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7. It is indeed surprising that the *Mahajana Sabha Scheme* did not refer to the problem of Labour at all.
 8. The Dewan Peishkar's Minute, 20 January, 1920. He stated that if "the distinction that is sought to be introduced in the scheme of the *Mahajana Sabha* between His Highness and the Dewan be removed as altogether fallacious then, the State Council, as proposed in that scheme, will reduce itself to an advisory body, pure and simple".
 9. British Resident's letter dated 26 November, 1920.

Accordingly the Cochin Legislative Council was brought into existence, representing all classes and interests in the State, in order to "advise our *Darbar* as to the laws to be enacted and otherwise co-operate with our *Darbar* for the general welfare".

The new Cochin Legislative Council was to consist of not less than fifty and not more than one hundred members. Forty Members were to be elected and the rest nominated, consisting partly of Government officials and partly of non-officials representing minorities, special interests and the like. The Council, to be presided over by the Dewan, would have a life of two years. It would have power to move resolutions on matters of public interest, put questions, make laws and regulations and discuss the annual budget. The Dewan could, with the Maharaja's previous approval, exercise certain powers. The Dewan thus could make rules to regulate the term of office of the members, the filling of vacancies, the election of members, the qualification of voters and candidates and the conduct of business in the Council and to prevent corrupt practices at elections. Nothing contained in the Proclamation, it was added, would "affect our prerogative right to make and pass Regulations and Proclamations independent of the Legislative Council, which right is hereby declared to have been always possessed and retained by us" and all the rules to be made by the Dewan under the Proclamation would have the force of law.

The Draft Rules under the Proclamation were published in the Government Gazette on 7 May, 1921 to elicit public criticism. In the light of such criticism the Dewan subsequently requested the British Resident¹⁰ to approve of the deletion of certain clauses which excluded certain subjects¹¹ from the cognizance of the Council. After all, the President and the Maharaja could check the Council and without the latter's consent no Bill could be passed into law; moreover the Maharaja enjoyed the prerogative to enact any legislative measure without reference to the Council and the President or Dewan could disallow any question or resolution without assigning any reason. The removal of the restrictions would have satisfied the public opinion too. But the Government of Madras was of the view that "it is not advisable to delete the clauses referred to in your letter".

The whole question was considered afresh and a decision made to issue a Regulation in the form of a regular enactment. This

10. Letter C. No. 4864/96 dated 24 December, 1921 from the Dewan to the British Resident.

11. Such subjects were those concerning the extradition of criminals, European vagrants, European British subjects, imperial post office, telegraph and railways and coinage and legal tender.

Regulation known as the Cochin Legislative Council Regulation (VIII of 1098) was approved and passed by the Maharaja on 9 August, 1923. On the same day another Regulation (IX of 1098) known as the Cochin Elections Offences and Inquiries Regulation also was passed. Rules and standing orders for regulating the business of the Council and rules relating to elections also were passed at the same time.

It was laid down in the Regulation that the Dewan should be the *ex officio* President of the Council and any member of the Council might be appointed as Deputy President by the Government. The strength of the Council was fixed at not less than thirty members and not more than sixty "of whom not less than two-thirds shall be elected and the rest shall be nominated". The term of the Council was fixed at three years though the Government would have power to shorten or extend the period according to necessity.

The new Legislative Council was formally inaugurated by the Maharaja in the Hill Palace, Trippunithura on 3 April, 1925. It became the legislative machinery for passing Acts. The first Council consisted of forty-five Members, thirty of them being elected and fifteen nominated. The franchise was associated with property qualification and there were both general and special constituencies, the latter representing particular interests. The Council could introduce Bills, obtain information from the Government through interpellations on matters of public importance, move resolutions, discuss and vote on the budget demands before they were finally passed. It could also call, through an adjournment motion, the attention of the Government to any urgent matter of public importance. But certain subjects were excluded from the purview of the Council. For example, the Council could not consider or enact any measure relating to or affecting the Ruling Family of Cochin; the Government's relations with the Paramount Power; matters governed by treaties, conventions or agreements in force or to be made by the Government with the Paramount Power; extradition of criminals; European vagrants; European British subjects; sea-ports; imperial post office; telegraph and railways; Military Forces including the Nair Brigade and the Maharaja's Body-guard; coinage or legal tender; State charities; Devaswoms belonging to or controlled by the Government; and the provisions of the Legislative Council Act. It was also not open to the Council to discuss expenditure relating to any matter statutorily removed from the cognizance of the Council; expenditure which was obligatory under any law, pensions and gratuities, salaries and allowances of officers.

The new Legislature was in no mood to give up its rights. In 1926 when the Chief Medical Officer in the State made adverse

comments on Mr. A. R. Menon, a Member of the Legislature, an adjournment motion was introduced by another Member which was, however, rejected by the Dewan. Thereupon a majority of the non-official Members staged a walk-out. At a public meeting held later at Ernakulam Mr. A. R. Menon pointed out that while the rules of the Legislature were narrow their interpretation was narrower still so much so that the Members of the Legislature were able to do little good to the public. The meeting resolved to form a committee that would appeal to the Maharaja to effect fresh constitutional reforms.

When the new Maharaja was installed on the throne of Cochin in January 1932, he announced:

“To enable a large number of my subjects to be associated with my Government.....it is my intention to extend the franchise for the Legislative Council by lowering the qualification at present required for a voter. I also intend to increase the privileges and responsibilities of the Legislative Council itself by conferring on it the right to elect its own Deputy President and extending to all Members of the Council the right to put supplementary questions on an original question put by any Member. It is my firm belief that by these measures the usefulness of the Council will be increased in proportion to the added privileges and responsibilities conferred upon it”.

A committee of officials and non-officials was constituted in November, 1932 to report on the question of broadening the franchise. On the basis of their recommendations, the Government decided to reduce, roughly by a half, the land revenue assessment municipal tax etc., payable for enrolment as a voter in general and special constituencies and to increase the total number of elected Members to thirty-six and the nominated Members to eighteen. The right to ask supplementary questions on original questions put by any Member and the right to elect the Deputy President had been already granted by the notifications of 23 July and 12 October, 1932, respectively.

A further step in constitutional reforms was taken in 1935 when four Advisory Committees of the Legislative Council were formed, each one of them consisting of three Members.¹² The nation—

12. Two of them were elected by the elected Members of the Legislative Council and the third was nominated from among them by the Government.

building departments were put under the purview of these Committees¹³

In 1936 the Cochin State Congress was constituted as a political party. There had been an effort in the early days to organise the *Cochin Mahajana Sabha* as a party which however was not a success. Thereafter political affairs were managed only through the organised efforts of a few prominent individuals. Subsequently the Progressive Party came into being. About 1934 a few members resigned from the Progressive Party apparently to realise its objectives better and formed the Independent Party with the birth of which the Progressive Party became extinct. The Independent Party began to call itself the Cochin State Congress Party from 6 August, 1936 onwards. It was realised that the political interests of the people should be served by a well-organised party in addition to the Legislature that was already functioning. The Cochin State Congress could claim its descent from the old Progressive Party and it aimed at rousing the people from their political lethargy. This State Congress had little connection with the Indian National Congress though it adopted the name. Its headquarters was at Wadachancherry near Trichur. Its Working Committee included T. K. Nair, K. Ayyappan, Panampilli Govinda Menon, E. Ikkanda Warriar, P. Kumaran Ezhuthachan, K. M. Ibrahim and T. C. Iyyukutty. They fixed parliamentary or responsible government as their goal and formulated an economic programme to promote popular welfare. On 23 November, 1936, the draft constitution of the State Congress was adopted and village committees were formed in various parts of Cochin. The new party soon came to have forty branches and 2000 members in the State.

There was then the Democratic Party organised under the leadership of Mr. M. Sivarama Menon. It also put responsible government, rural improvement, Harijan uplift and compulsory primary education as its objectives.

In August, 1937, in the course of a discussion on the budget in the Cochin Legislature, a constitutional amendment was moved demanding the constitution of a responsible Ministry in the State to be in charge of all matters except those concerning the Ruling Family relations with the Paramount Power, Devaswoms and law and order. It was passed.

On 4 January, 1938, when a public *darbar* was held in connection with the seventy-sixth birth-day celebration of the Maharaja

13. They were Education; Medical and Public Health; Co-operation; Agriculture; Panchayats; Uplift of the depressed classes; and Industries and Commerce.

an announcement was made on his behalf by Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetty, the Dewan of Cochin, which marked a further advance in the constitutional development of the State.^{13a}

"Having been impressed by the genuine interest evinced by the Members of the Legislative Council, I have decided that steps should now be taken to associate my people directly with the administration of my Government and make the Legislative Council responsible, in a more effective manner, for the administration of certain nation-building departments. This object can best be achieved by associating a non-official representative from the Legislative Council with my Dewan in the carrying on of the administration of certain Departments. I have, therefore, decided that the administration of the Departments of Public Health, Panchayats, Co-operation, Agriculture, Ayurveda and Uplift of the Depressed Classes shall hereafter be conducted by my Dewan with the assistance of a Minister nominated by me from amongst the elected members of the Legislative Council. This Minister will be called "Minister for Rural Development" and he will hold office during my pleasure. Though the administration of these Departments will normally be carried on in accordance with the advice of my Minister it is necessary that my prerogative should be preserved unimpaired. My undoubted right and prerogative of ordering at any time that action should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the advice tendered by any of my advisers will be preserved in the administration of these and other Departments of my Government. My Government will issue the necessary amendments to the Acts and Regulations to implement this, my desire.

I hope that my people will realise the significance of the momentous step that has been taken. Though it has always been my desire and the desire of my Government to carry on the administration of my State in accordance with the wishes of my people, the announcement that I have made to-day will for the first time make the representatives of the people directly responsible for the administration of some of the great Departments of the State. The administration of these Departments, more than any other, vitally affects the every-day life of the rural population and the responsibility that devolves upon my Minister and the Legislative Council will, therefore, be very great indeed. The welfare of the vast mass of the rural population has been my constant care. On their contentment depends the prosperity and stability of the State, and in their

13a. Cochin Government Gazette, Vol. LXXII, Public and Political Department, 8 January, 1938.

happiness I seek my reward. It is my earnest desire that the representatives of my people in the Legislative Council will realise the magnitude of the responsibility that they are called upon to shoulder and I pray that they may be given the courage and wisdom to shoulder that responsibility in a worthy manner".

In June 1938, Mr. Ambat Sivarama Menon was appointed as the first Minister for Rural Development. On his demise on 30 August, Dr. A. R. Menon succeeded him as Minister. Besides the subjects originally transferred to him, the Minister came to be subsequently put in charge of two additional ones, Fisheries and Rural Libraries.

Having watched the working of the new constitution for some time, the Dewan, Mr. R. K. Shanmukham Chetty, claimed that the State could be proud of her representative Legislature with effective powers, her Executive with popular control over certain Departments and her independent Judiciary with the High Court at its apex enforcing the Rule of Law. The new Legislative Council, claimed the Dewan, had a non-official majority elected on broad franchise, as well as an effective voice in the control of public expenditure. As to the Executive, the intention of the new constitution had been to entrust some nation-building departments to the control of a popular Minister, the leader of a political party, commanding the confidence of the majority in the Legislature; the decisions of the Minister affecting the finance of the State, however, required the approval of the Dewan.

On the whole, dyarchy, discredited in the British Indian Provinces, was the characteristic feature of the Executive under the new constitution in Cochin.

Cochin was hailed as the first Princely State to have set the ball of responsible government rolling. The new reform was looked upon as an important stage in the constitutional progress of Indian States.¹⁴

14. Sir K. V. Reddy, who had been Acting Governor of Madras, Sir Purushothamdas Thakurdas, Mr. Raghavendra Rao, Sri P. S. Sivaswamy Iyer and Mr. H. P. Mody expressed their appreciation of the reform.

CHAPTER 30

GANDHIJI IN THE BACKGROUND

We shall now go back to Malabar where the Civil Disobedience Movement had been going on. As we noted earlier it was decided to discontinue temporarily the mass movement, including the no-tax campaign. But as pointed out by Mr. M. S. Aney, individual Satyagraha was allowed. None was to resort to any secret method of action though constructive activity could be pursued.

Gandhiji and his party including Kasturba and Mahadev Desai were arrested on the night of 1 August, 1933 while they were sleeping in a friend's bungalow and confined in the Sabarmati Jail, Gandhiji was later released but re-arrested on 4 August, 1933 under the Bombay Emergency Powers Ordinance of 1932 for violation of the prohibitory order asking him not to go out of the Poona city. After trial within the Yerawada Jail he was sentenced to simple imprisonment for one year, along with Mahadev Desai and was unconditionally released on 23 August. He conferred with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the political situation in India and in September, resolved never to court imprisonment for one year.

A few sad events happened at this time that cast a shadow on the political firmament of India and of Kerala, in particular.

Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta had already expired on 23 July as prisoner at Ranchi. Dr. (Mrs) Annie Besant died on 20 September; Mr. K. Madhavan Nair on 28 September; and Mr. V. J. Patel at Geneva on 23 October. Mrs. Besant's death was a personal loss to the people of Kerala, with whom she had associated herself actively in the freedom struggle at one time. Mr. Madhavan Nair's demise was a serious blow to Kerala for he had been the soul of the nationalist movement in the land. As a lawyer, legislator, political leader and social reformer, he had stamped his individuality on the public life in Kerala. His selfless devotion, transparent sincerity, high-spirited patriotism and moral courage endeared him to all and his death created a void in public life which could not be filled easily.

On his return from earthquake-stricken Bihar, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested under section 124-A on 12 February, 1934, taken to Calcutta and sentenced to two years' simple imprisonment.

On 31 March the leaders of the right wing¹ in the Congress met at Dr. Ansari's residence in Delhi and after prolonged discussions decided on the revival of the Swarajya Party to enable those who could not offer Individual Satyagraha to put into effect, through an organisation, the constructive programme chalked out in the announcements subsequent to the Poona Conference. The representatives of the Swarajya Party were to accept the Government's challenge and contest elections to the Central Legislature; they must try to effect the withdrawal of all repressive legislation and reject the provisions contained in the White Paper on constitutional reforms. They were to incorporate the nationalist demands put forth by Gandhiji at the Round Table Conference. These proposals were to be put before Gandhiji for his approval. A Committee under Dr. Ansari's presidentship was to be formed to frame the constitution and policy of the Swarajya Party and its decisions were to be placed before all Congressmen in the land.

Gandhiji blessed this programme of entry into the Central Legislature though his opinion about the utility of such a body with limited powers remained as it originally had been in 1920. The news was welcomed by the members of the Madras Swarajya Party. On 7 April Gandhiji announced that introspection after discussions with his own followers made him decide on the stopping of the Civil Disobedience Movement. He alone would have the authority to resume it; no one, in his own life time, should resort to it without his consent in so far as he was the only expert on Satyagraha. Gandhiji was pained to hear that many Satyagrahi prisoners never carried out their duties but only fought and clamoured for petty rights and privileges. He advised them, as he always did, to spin and weave khadi, enforce Prohibition, remove untouchability and contribute to communal amity.

At the Swarajya 'Party Conference' at Ranchi, presided over by Dr. Ansari on 1 May, 1934, it was decided that the party, the

1. Among the leaders were Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Dr. Ansari, T. C. Goswami, K. F. Nariman, K. M. Munshi, K. Santanam and Mohanlal Saxena.
2. At this conference, Dr. B. C. Roy's resolution was adopted by a majority, to the effect that the policy of the Swarajya Party should be to make the nation self-reliant in all its efforts to attain prosperity and to oppose everything that would block the attainment of *Swaraj*. To realise this ideal the party would adopt the following programme of action: (1) all laws and ordinances, preventing India's progress and blocking her attainment of *swaraj*, would be repealed; (2) the political prisoners and those imprisoned without trial would be released from jail, and property, confiscated for political reasons, restored to its owners; and

main object of which was to fight against the Government in the Legislatures, should remain within the Congress; only the members of the Congress were to be the members of the party. The party wanted the formation of a Constituent Assembly representing different sections in India to frame a constitution for the country.

The Congressmen in Kerala met at Calicut on 12 May to take stock of the situation created by the rejuvenation of the Swarajya Party within the Congress. They welcomed Gandhiji's announcement suspending the Civil Disobedience Movement. They requested the All-India Congress Committee to cancel the Working Committee's original decision calling upon all Indians to join the Civil Disobedience Movement, removing that item temporarily from the official programme.³ They also pointed out the desirability of convening a full session of the Congress to give shape to a new political

the practice of deporting the political prisoners to Andaman Island would be stopped; (3) all laws, intended to be passed for exploiting the country's wealth would be opposed; (4) legislation would be introduced to promote national life and put an end to the foreign domination; (5) the expenditure in the Military Department would be reduced in order to lighten the burden of the India Government; (6) a new economic policy would be adopted to prevent exploitation and the flow of capital outside the country; (7) the economic condition would be so improved as to ensure a decent standard of life for every worker; (8) the interests of industrial labourers and peasants would be looked after, their conditions of work and wages regulated, the disputes between the capitals and the labourers and between the peasants and the landlords satisfactorily settled, and protection afforded against old age, illness and unemployment; (9) the workers would be saved from every kind of slavery; (10) the peasants and labourers would be given the right to organise; (11) the currency and exchange would be regulated in national interest (12) the peasants would be relieved of their burden of debt; (13) steps would be taken to promote communal harmony; (14) untouchability would be eradicated and the uplift of the down-trodden effected; (15) rural reconstruction would be attempted; (16) control would be established over all self-governing institutions in the country; (17) the constructive programme of the Congress would be implemented; (18) and the co-operation of other nations would be sought in India's struggle for freedom through effective propaganda.

3. The meeting was presided over by U. Gopala Menon. Nearly seventy persons took part in it. This resolution was moved by Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar. Muhammad Abdur Rahman suggested that the portion concerning the removal of the Civil Disobedience from the programme of the Congress might be deleted. M. N. Pisharodi moved an amendment to the effect that the portion welcoming Gandhiji's statement should be deleted. Both the suggestions were rejected and the original resolution was passed.

programme⁴ and to consider the Swarajya Party's desire to enter the Legislature and fight from within.⁵ The authority retained by Gandhiji in his own hands to resume the Civil Disobedience for the realisation of the ideals of the Congress was viewed with anxiety.⁶ He was requested not to do so as long as there was no universal Civil Disobedience Movement in India in the name of the Congress. The All-India Congress Committee was called upon to bring persuasive pressure on him in the matter. A resolution sponsored by Mr. A. K. Warrier that the Congress should remove Harijan uplift and similar matters of social importance from its programme was subsequently withdrawn by the mover himself.

The All-India Congress Committee met at Patna on 7 April, 1934 when Dr. Ansari moved that Gandhiji's recommendation to suspend the Civil Disobedience Movement might be accepted. The resolution led to a heated discussion, for a few persons did not want to entrust him with complete powers to decide about the future of the movement. After Gandhiji's reply to the debate the resolution in its original form was accepted. The Committee then passed a resolution on Council entry initiated by Gandhiji himself. As there were several Congressmen who looked upon Council entry as an effective method to achieve India's freedom a committee might be formed with twenty-two members including Dr. Ansari as President and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, to control the choice of Congress members to the Legislatures. The Committee would have power to collect and utilise funds and draft the necessary rules of procedure and it would work under the supervision and control of the All India Congress Committee. Only those individuals would be chosen as Congress candidates who would be ready to carry out, in the Legislatures, the policy that the Congress might decide upon from time to time.

4. This resolution was moved by P. K. Kunhisankara Menon and passed *nem con*.

5. This resolution was initiated by H. Manjunatha Roa, P. Krishna Pillai, in an amendment, opposed the attempt of the Swarajya Party to enter Council in the name of the Congress and yet as a distinct party. After heated discussion it was finally resolved that the question of Council entry should be decided at a full meeting of the Congress, and if the latter approved of the same, it should be taken up by the All-India Congress Committee and not left to any party, distinct from the Congress organisation.

6. This resolution, moved by K. Madhavanar, was opposed only by R. V. Sharma who stated that others should not interfere in matters concerning Gandhiji.

On 13 June, 1934 the Government of Madras lifted the ban on the Congress committees in Kerala. For the first time since January 1932, when the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee had been declared to be unlawful, that body⁷ met at Calicut on 19 June. U. Gopala Menon was elected as President⁸ while P. K. Kunhisankara Menon and A. K. Gopalan Nambiar were elected as Secretaries. The meeting adopted a few resolutions concerning the institution of a memorial for the late Mr. K. Madhavan Nair, the Labour strike in Bombay continuing at that time and the effective organisation of Congress work in Kerala. A committee was appointed to assist the All-India Congress Parliamentary Board in its work regarding Kerala.⁹ P. Achuthan, E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad and K. Raman Menon were elected to represent Kerala on the Election Committee of the Parliamentary Board.

On 14 July 1934 Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was released from jail and he took charge as President of the Congress. Samuel Aaron was the candidate¹⁰ who represented the Congress in the election to the Central Legislature from the West Coast constituency. The election campaign was inaugurated at Calicut in July by C. Rajagopalachari. Next month a huge procession was conducted in the town and a public meeting held by the Congress, the first after the lifting of the ban, as part of the election campaign.

Late in June, 1934 was reported the shocking news of a bomb being thrown on Gandhiji's car at Poona. On 7 August he embarked

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7. It may be noted that the meeting was convened by P. K. Kunhisankara Menon and not by the Secretaries. His explanation was that a re-organisation was urgently necessary in view of the impending Congress session. L. S. Prabhu, President, had expressed his inability for active work and the Secretaries, K. A. Damodara Menon and Syed Mohamed were not in Calicut to carry on the work.
 8. K. P. Gopalan suggested that only a person who could devote all his time for congress work should be elected as President but the Chairman ruled his resolution as out of order. Damodara Menon's resignation of the Secretaryship was accepted.
 9. The Committee included A. C. Kannan Nair, Samuel Aaron, C. K. Govindan Nair, Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar, P. Achuthan, T. A. S. Iyer, K. Madhavanar, K. Raman Menon, V. Sankaranarayana Menon, Panku Menon and P. K. Kunhisankara Menon.
 10. In the election conducted later, he was declared elected with a huge majority in the West Coast Constituency. In the Muslim Constituency, however, Abdul Saltar Salt was elected, the Congress candidate, Muhammad Abdur Rahman being defeated. In November, 1934 there was a clash at Calicut among the rival Muslim parties.

on one week's fast at his *ashram* at Wardha as one of the volunteers had assaulted a *sanatani* at Ajmer. He deplored the quarrels among Congressmen in regard to the elections and their thirst for power. He reminded them that membership of the Congress implied silent service to the motherland rather than high official position of fame.

On 17 January 1934 Gandhiji issued a long statement in which he touched on a number of subjects. He was thinking in terms of severing his connection with the Indian National Congress. Though Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai requested him to remain within the Congress, Sardar Patel and Abdul Kalam Azad would have liked him to quit it. A few congressmen were feeling, Gandhiji stated, that he and his programme were an obstacle to national progress and that the Congress had more or less fallen under his dictatorship. They did not see eye to eye with him on several matters and would have chalked out a new path for the Congress "but for their reluctance to be unfaithful to me." He had received "ardent following and faithfulness" which, he felt, he should not misuse any more, for "by doing so, I will be throwing my heavy burden on them." Many of the leaders had discarded spinning out of their programme of activity and had been treating the khadi clause in the Congress constitution as a dead-letter from its inception. But his own faith in khadi was increasing; to "remove khadi clause from the Congress constitution means severance of all connections with the masses by Congress. If Congress is to represent masses as heretofore khadi clause must strictly be enforced." Again there was much difference of opinion in regard to the parliamentary wing in the Congress. Gandhiji felt that others were subordinating their differing views to his own, thereby sacrificing them. The policy to be adopted towards the Princely States as suggested by a few members also was different from that of Gandhiji. His plan of work to remove untouchability was not agreeable to many; his action regarding the Civil Disobedience Movement was being viewed as a "big blunder," though he felt that his action was correct. While non-violence was only a "policy" to the majority of Congressmen even after fourteen years of experiment with it, it was "a basic ideal as far as it concerns me." Gandhiji was of the view that the nation had not been practising "undiluted non-violence" and wanted to show to the Government and the terrorists in India "that non-violence has the practical strength to gain independence." In fact he had dedicated his whole life for this experiment, to conduct which he should have absolute freedom. "Satyagraha," he added, "is only a part of non-violence." Truth is my God. I can find Him only through non-violence." He had his differences with others even in regard to the definition of 'complete independence' or *purna swaraj*. Anti-untouchability campaign, Hindu-Muslim unity, Prohibition, hand-spinning, khadi and total *swadeshi* or village industries would certainly go a long way in re-organising rural life

in India. Gandhiji expressed his desire to settle down in any one of the villages, preferably in the North West Frontier and offer silent service to the country. He added, "whether I am in or out of the Congress, I wish to serve the Congress in my own humble way." It would be painful for him to leave the organisation that had served the country selflessly so long. Gandhiji had his own resolution to be placed before the Congress. Rebindranath Tagore however earnestly appealed to him not to leave the Congress as his severance would be "a national calamity."

The policy of the Indian National Congress was clearly indicated in the resolutions passed by its Working Committee at Wardha as well as in the manifestos issued by the Congress Parliamentary Board since its constitution in May, 1934. The Congress emphasised that India's goal was *purna swaraj* implying unfettered national control over the army and the defence forces, external affairs, and commercial, financial and economic policy. India should have freedom of choice between voluntary partnership with the British empire and complete separation. While the Congress would not repudiate the just financial obligations it demanded an impartial scrutiny of such obligations. The Congress felt that the White Paper represented the will of the people in no way but only proposed a "costly pretence of representative institutions with all real control retained abroad;"¹¹ the safeguards with which it bristled would only present India's economic development, deepen the poverty of the masses and perpetuate exploitation. The Working Committee suggested the formation of a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage which alone would be an infallible alternative to the White Paper.

The British Government, however, emphasised the material advantages of India's connection with the British empire which represented "the super-imposition of a more enlightened ideal upon the product of maritime adventures, commercial enterprise and military conquest" and in which "conditions are both sound and stable."¹² They contended that the safeguards were designed to secure the financial stability of the country, the protection of the minorities and the prevention of any grave menace to the peace and tranquillity of India. They considered that the suggestion in regard to the Constituent Assembly was a "somewhat vague and nebulous proposal which does not appear to have yet been worked out in detail."¹³ According to the Government, repressive legislation was rendered necessary to prevent coercion through boycott, picketing etc. and suppress subversive movements "designed

11. Government of India, Home Department, Simla 20 September, 1934.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

in some cases to upset not merely the Government but the whole economic and social structure of the State."

On 1 October, 1934, M. P. Narayana Menon was released from the Vellore Jail, having already undergone incarceration for thirteen years. His continuation in jail for such a long time in spite of numerous popular appeals to the Government for his release casts a stain on the memory of British rule in Malabar. Meanwhile C. Kunhikavu Amma had been elected as the President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. She was the first woman President of that Committee. Her election was indeed a tribute paid to the role played by the women of Kerala in the national movement from 1930. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met on 14 October at Shoranur and passed a resolution welcoming M. P. Narayana Menon after his release. This meeting more or less marked the growing predominance of the Socialist Party within the Congress. Among others, two resolutions were passed regarding the publication of the *History of the Congress* in Malayalam and the organisation of an agitation for the reduction of land revenue in Malabar. The President in her speech deplored the group conflicts within the Congress organisation and stressed the fact that Gandhiji was the one man who had roused the nation with a practical programme of political action and that in the interests of the country's prosperity and unity his views should be considered and followed with respect and with a sense of humility and gratitude.

At the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Bombay Gandhiji bade farewell to the great organisation on 23 October, 1934. He announced his intention to leave the Congress as he felt that his continuance in it would do more harm than benefit and stunt its natural growth as well. His decision was not the result of any sudden disappointment or anger; remaining outside, he said, he might be able to serve the country and the Congress more effectively. The nation, in his view, should gather power for winning *swaraj* through *ahimsa*, *charka* and spinning, in which, however, others did not seem to have as much basic faith as he; they were, therefore, at the parting of the ways. For the time being he found himself weak and helpless, unable to give a proper lead; but he would rejoin the Congress the moment he felt that his action in deserting that organisation was wrong. The Congress that began its forty-eighth session at Bombay on 26 October, 1934, requested him to re-consider his decision but he stuck to it. Later at Wardha he made it quite clear that his withdrawal did never imply that he would have no interest in the affairs of the Congress but only that he would no longer shape its policy in future.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee Report issued in November, 1934 disappointed even the Liberals like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar. The Muslim League rejected it. At a meeting held at Patna on 6 December, 1934 the Congress Working Committee also resolved to reject it totally. The people in Malabar held meetings at several places to protest against the proposed reforms.

An All-Malabar Tax-Payers' Conference was convened at Calicut on 10 February, 1935 under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. It protested against the Government's total disregard of the resolution passed by the Madras Legislature in regard to the remission of revenue in areas where the crops had failed and pointed out the need to reject the next budget altogether. It demanded a revision of the Government's land revenue administration and the adoption of a broad economic policy to root out poverty and unemployment in the rural areas.

Kerala lost one of her ardent nationalists in the sad demise of T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer at Tali in Calicut on 29 April 1935. Having given up legal practice nearly fifteen years earlier to join the freedom struggle, he never went back to the Bar but devoted his entire time in the service of the country and the Congress. He had participated in the Vaikom Satyagraha and the Civil Disobedience Movement. The founder of the *Sabari ashram* at Olavakkot and a typical Gandhian, he had done admirable work in regard to Harijan uplift and the popularisation of khadi.

On the initiative of S. A. Brelvi, the right wing and the Socialist section in the Congress came to a mutual agreement towards the end of May, 1935. It was expected to strengthen the Congress organisation in Malabar.

Babu Rajendra Prasad, President of the Congress, began his tour of Malabar and Cochin from 1 December, 1935. It was the first visit of the great leader to Calicut where he was given a hearty reception in connection with the opening of the fourth All-India Khadi and *Swadeshi* Exhibition. During the tour that lasted for a week he addressed nearly fifty-seven public meetings and collected funds for the Congress. He recorded a very happy impression of the enthusiasm of the people and the great sense of discipline evinced by them.

The golden jubilee celebrations of the Indian National Congress took place¹⁴ in the last week of December, 1935. There was a varied programme including items of constructive work, processions, public meetings, literary competitions, spinning competition, inter-caste dining etc. At Calicut, as part of the celebrations, the foundation stone for the Madhavan Nair Memorial Building was laid by T. N. Manavedan Raja, Senior Raja of Nilambur.

There was an unfortunate clash, probably inspired by the police, at Cannanore in February, 1936 between Hindus and Moplahs who objected to a religious procession led by the former before a mosque. The procession was stopped by the police with bayonet, against customary practice and without warning. The citizens of Cannanore held a huge public meeting on *Chalat Maidan* on 5 March when Pothair Madhavan moved a resolution to protest against the Government's attempt to engender ill-feeling between the Hindus and Moplahs in Malabar and to recognise and secure new rights for the Moplahs. On account of the police order that Hindu processions should not go with music before mosques, many temple festivals had to be abandoned in Cannanore, including those of the Karuvallikavu Temple and the Sri Sundareshwara Temple. At Natuvattom near Calicut also the Moplahs objected to the Hindu processions in front of the local

14. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee resolved on 30 September, 1935, to celebrate the golden jubilee in accordance with the instructions to be issued by the All India Congress Committee from time to time. It was decided to ask for the help and co-operation of all Local Bodies in the matter. "A history of the Congress movement in Kerala" was to be written in Malayalam and arrangement made with a Firm of Publishers to bring out a translation of the *History of the Congress*, being written by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Jubilee certificates should be given to the "righteous soldiers" who had made sacrifices to the cause of India's freedom. (File No. 944 dated 21 January, 1936).

The All-India Congress Office had suggested (a) the sale of national flags bearing the caption 'Congress Golden Jubilee' on one side and a picture of the *charka* on the other (b) the publication of the lives of those who adopted non-violence and met with death in the Congress campaign during 1921-34 and (c) the preparation of a roll of names of those who were imprisoned. (*The Mathrubhumi* dated 16 November, 1936).

The Government of Madras ordered that no Municipality or Local Board should spend money on account of the jubilee celebrations. The Municipal Council, Cannanore, decided against such celebrations though the Councils of Tellicherry and Calicut promised all help to the Provincial Congress Committee so far as the rules would permit them.

mosque. The District Collector Mr. A. R. Mc Elwen's efforts to bring about an agreement between the two communities failed. On 16 March a military contingent had a road march in Cannanore town when they passed in front of the mosques with band music and there was none to protest.

Meanwhile an *Avarana Conference* met at Calicut in order to establish an All-Malabar Youth League for safeguarding the interests of the *avarana* communities. The attempt to pass a resolution¹⁵ of loyalty to the new King of England led to an uproar and the meeting ended inconclusively.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was elected as President of the Indian National Congress in February, 1936. While being given a grand reception at Caxton Hall, London, he stated that there would be no peace in India as long as the Government of India Act of 1935 was in force, though India and Britain might continue in mutual friendship. Pandit Nehru returned to India in March. There was universal mourning in Kerala, as in other parts of India, on 11 March, on account of the demise of the great leader's wife, Kamala.

In the budget session of the Central Legislative Assembly, 1936, the Government was defeated successively on several measures. The motion moved by Pandit Nilkanta Das to abolish the hated Salt Tax was passed by a majority, as also another resolution that Subhas Chandra Bose should be permitted to enter India.¹⁶ Though the Finance Bill was rejected by the Assembly the Governor-General certified it.

Meanwhile, news came of the violation of the Locarno Pact by Herr Hitler whose men marched into Rhineland. The Ethiopian

15. The resolution was to record the deep regret of the *avarana* community in Malabar at the demise of George the Fifth, Emperor of India and express loyalty to the new Emperor, Edward the Eighth and the British Royal Family. P. Achuthan suggested the splitting up of the resolution into two parts so that those who might vote for the first part could yet oppose the latter portion. The Chairman refused to accept the suggestion. He declared the resolution as passed in spite of opposition. There was another resolution to condole the sad demise of Smt. Kamala Nehru at Lausanne, Geneva. An opinion was now expressed that it was ridiculous to pass such a resolution regarding a patriotic and selfless lady who had served the country, at a meeting of reactionaries where a resolution of loyalty had been passed by the President in utter disregard of the wishes of the participants.
16. He was arrested at Bombay on 8 April, 1936 on landing after a visit to Europe.

War was continuing.¹⁷ The All-India Congress Working Committee, meeting at New Delhi on 25 March, 1936, passed a resolution that the Indian people would have nothing to do with the colonial wars. They deplored the repressive policy of the Government, at the centre and in the Provinces and the Princely States, and decided on the organisation of Labour and peasantry on a mass scale.

At the forty-ninth annual session of the Congress, held at Lucknow in April, 1936, the sympathy of the Indian people was extended to the out-raged Ethiopia. The question of office acceptance was left to be decided at a special session of the All-India Congress Committee. The Congress decided to contest the elections to the Provincial Legislatures. The Parliamentary Board was abolished, the members of the Working Committee themselves undertaking to discharge its work. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's Working Committee, formed newly, included a few members of the left wing like Acharya Narendra Dev, Jaya Prakash Narin, Achyuth Patwardhan and Subhas Chandra Bose.

17. Subsequently in May the Ethiopian Emperor fled from the country and Mussolini declared the end of the war.

CHAPTER 31

CONGRESS ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Lord Willingdon went back to England on 15 April, 1936. The new Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, expressed his desire to come into contact with the political leaders of India.

The Government of India Act, 1935 was to have come into force from 1 April, 1937. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Parliamentary Committee of the Indian National Congress appealed to the voters¹ to return only Congressmen to all the seats in the Indian Provincial Legislatures. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made a whirl-wind tour of India on election campaign. On 22 August, 1936 the All-India Congress Working Committee adopted at Bombay the election manifesto prepared by the Parliamentary Committee. The election propaganda in Malabar was inaugurated at Calicut by Smt. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya. The leaders of the Peoples' Party² also began to do propaganda in October but they found little sympathy for them in Malabar.

Towards the end of December, 1936, the Congress met in its fiftieth session at Faizpur. It was the first time that a session was being held in a village. Gandhiji, though not a member of the Congress, arrived early and supervised the arrangements in regard to the Village Industries Exhibition. The Working Committee warned the people against the possible utilisation of men and material in India by the British in case a World War might break out. They called upon the nation to resist such exploitation and also not to take part in the celebrations in India, connected with the coronation ceremony in Britain, which would only tighten the imperialist grip on India. The Working Committee also condemned the repressive policy of the Government that stifled freedom of expression and freedom of movement and emphasised the need for political liberty underlying all other kinds of freedom. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stated that co-operation, in any form, with the new constitutional reforms of 1935 would only put a spoke in the wheel of India's struggle for freedom and contribute further to her exploitation for imperialist purposes. There was need, therefore, to continue the struggle, inside and outside the Legislatures;

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1. As regards the Provincial Assembly, the new Act gave the right of voting to all literates.
 2. It was a mushroom party formed by some die-hards. It came to an end as soon as the elections were over.

the Indian people could recognise only a constitution framed by themselves, based on complete independence, and consistent with the needs and aspirations of the nation. The Indian National Congress was fighting for a fully democratic republic based upon adult franchise. It was expected that the candidates, representing the Congress, for election to the Provincial Legislatures would work in accordance with the principles contained in the Election Manifesto issued by the All-India Congress Committee and fight for the recognition of adult franchise as the first step towards a democratic republic. The Provincial Congress Committees were to ascertain the general opinion of the subordinate organisations in the matter of acceptance of office and communicate the same to the All-India Congress Committee for consideration and necessary action. The need to cultivate contact with the masses was emphasised at this session.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru toured South India in January, 1937, in connection with the forthcoming elections. The Congress put forth its candidates for seats from the various constituencies in Malabar. After the Independence Day Celebrations on 26 January, 1937, Bhulabhai Desai, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, Avanashilingam Chettiar and others addressed meetings in important places in Malabar. The Socialists supported the Congress candidates, some of whom were Socialists. On 10 February, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru spent nearly twenty minutes at Cannanore exhorting the people to vote for the Congress.

The All-India Muslim League also had its candidates in the Muslim constituencies in Malabar. Maulana Shaukat Ali toured Malabar asking the Moplah voters to vote for the candidates put up by the Muslim League.

The general election began in Malabar on 16 February, 1937. The voters were enthusiastic.³ The women were in the forefront⁴ marching to the polling booths in processions and singing national

3. Kavalot Vaman, aged 85, led a batch of nearly 600 voters of Kodal, Olavanna and Nallalam suburbs of Calicut, in hot sun for about six miles and cast his vote in the "YELLOW BOX" (Congress).

4. From Parayancherry in Calicut about 70 women walked a distance of three miles to the Cheyayur polling booth, singing national songs.

songs. Officials in large numbers also exercised their franchise, evidently for the Congress.

Out of the eleven Provinces in India the Congress got a majority in six. In Malabar, naturally, the Congress emerged triumphantly.⁵

5. Most of the results are indicated below:

Madras Legislative Council: (Two seats)	K. Madhava Menon (1509) (Congress) M. Narayana Menon (1411) (Congress) K. Gopalan Nambiar (814) V. Madhava Raja (363)
Chirakkal:	P. Madhavan (21904) (Congress) A. Achuthan (2093)
Calicut:	P. Achuthan (18993) (Congress) Manjeri S. Rama Iyer (1937) M. P. Sivadasa Menon (1188)
Kottayam:	M. P. Damodaran (17202) (Congress) K. Krishnan (3266)
Women (Reserved)	A. V. Kuttimalu Amma (8261) (Congress) C. K. Leela Krishnan (2095)
Christian (Reserved)	C. J. Varkey (11131) Congress M. S. Sreshta (8354)
Malappuram (Muslim)	Muhammad Abdur Rahman (27398) (Congress) Unni Kammu Saheb (12323) Chekku Saheb (10890)
Malappuram (General) (Two seats; one reserved for Scheduled Class)	A. Karunakara Menon (38297) (Congress) E. Kannan (Harijan, reserved) (7154) (Congress) K. P. Raman Menon (8436) Chadayan (1536) Koppan (1070)
Ponnani:	K. Raman Menon (16660) (Congress) C. K. Balakrishnan (5062) C. P. Narayana Menon (217)
Kurumbranad:	C. K. Govindan Nair (15100) (Congress) K. Rama Varma Elaya Raja (2826) V. P. Narayanan Nambiar (2439)
Palghat:	R. Raghava Menon (21151) (Congress) C. P. Madhavan Nair (4648)

Gandhiji was present at the meeting of the All-India Congress Working Committee at Wardha on 27 February, 1937. It was made clear that the entry of the Congress into the Legislature was not to work out the Reforms but to wreck the new constitution from within. The Congress intended to stick to its declared policy of not co-operating with the machinery of British colonialism. The Congress Working Committee demanded the summoning of a Constituent Assembly based upon adult franchise. Instructions were issued in regard to the line of work of the Legislators for whom a code of conduct was prescribed, particularly with reference to their relations with the Government. Every Legislator was to maintain constant contact and discuss matters with the electorate. The Working Committee appreciated the need to organise the politically conscious masses in accordance with the ideals of the Congress which had been voted to power by them.

Almost all the committees under the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee had expressed themselves, when consulted, in favour of acceptance of office.⁶ At the meeting on 7 March, 1937, the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee expressed their opinion that in all Provinces where the Congress had got a majority, office should be accepted as ample opportunity would be available to wreck the constitution from within and as such a step might rouse the nation politically.⁷ E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad was now appointed as whole-time Secretary to organise the Congress work in rural parts in Malabar.

C. Rajagopalachari was unanimously elected as the Leader of the Madras Congress Assembly Party on 10 March, 1937. The All-India Congress Working Committee met at Delhi on 15 March and authorised the formation of Ministries in all Provinces in which the Congress had got a majority at the elections; the Leader of the Assembly Party however should not form a Ministry unless he received a prior assurance from the Governor that so long as the Ministry worked according to the principles of the constitution, he would not exercise his special powers or reject the advice tendered by the Ministers; the Leader should also be able to publish

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6. The Malabar District Congress Committee, however, was of the view that the acceptance of office would retard political progress. At a public meeting held at Calicut on 7 March, 1937, under the presidency of T. V. Sundara Iyer a resolution was passed in favour of acceptance of office.
 7. K. Madhava Menon moved the resolution which was opposed by A. K. Pillai, P. Krishna Pillai and N. C. Sekhar. It was passed finally, twelve having voted for and nine against it.

this information⁸ for the benefit of the public. Three days later, after a long debate, the All-India Congress Committee approved of the above resolution passed by the Working Committee.⁹

There was an All-India Congress Convention at this time in Delhi, attended by nearly 900 delegates. The British Government was called upon to scrap the new constitution of India.

Towards the end of the month C. Rajagopalachari interviewed the Governor of Madras, but could not obtain the required assurance. The latter rather invited Sir K. V. Reddy, a leader of the Justice Party, to constitute an Interim Ministry¹⁰ and he agreed to do so. The Liberal leaders in India now appealed to the Governor-General and the Secretary of State to solve the crisis by giving the necessary assurances to the Congress.

The new constitution came into force on 1 April, 1937. As called upon by the Congress, the whole nation observed a hartal on that day. Jinnah, President of the Muslim League, however asked his co-religionists not to participate in the demonstration organised by the Congress. In spite of the order of the Government against it, the Municipal Council, Calicut, resolved that all offices and institutions under it should observe the hartal.

In April 1937 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru emphasised the need for the Congress to establish active contact with the Muslim masses who had been ignored for some time. The ideal of the Congress was to capture authority, in which every citizen of India ought to have a share, irrespective of religious differences. Poverty, the common property of all Indians, should be replaced by freedom and economic prosperity. The Congress, Pandit Nehru added, was the sole common platform to agitate for and achieve them. Though the Congress was not anxious to deal with religious matters, it yet realised that religion plays an important role in an individual's life and so, at its Karachi session and on later occasions, it stressed on religious freedom, protection of minority interests and equality for all citizens irrespective of caste or creed. The minorities should not seek to strengthen themselves with the support of British imperialism but must preserve an inherent strength of their own; nobody could think of suppressing them.

8. This resolution was drafted by Gandhiji. Eight members voted for and four against it.

9. The resolution was moved by Rajendra Prasad.

10. The Interim Ministry included also Rao Bahadur A. T. Pannirselvam; Kumararaja M. A., Muthia Chettiar, R. M. Palat and P. Khalifulla Saheb.

But some of the Moplahs in Malabar never paid heed to the positive voice of secularism. At a huge meeting convened at Cannanore on 21 May, 1937, under the presidentship of T. M. Abdulla they characterised the Congress as a Hindu organisation and reminded the Congress President that the Muslims were not like sheep without a shepherd. K. M. Seethi Saheb stated that the resolution of the Congress on fundamental rights was not sufficient to satisfy the Muslims. A resolution was passed at the meeting to the effect that there should be clauses in the Indian constitution to safeguard the religious, cultural and political interests of the Muslims. The attempt of the Congress to enrol Muslims in the organisation as members without entering into any agreement with their chosen representatives was considered a dangerous step. The Muslims were called upon to strengthen themselves and establish branches of the Muslim League wherever possible. On 22 May, Jinnah and Shaukat Ali attacked, at a public meeting at Bombay, Pandit Nehru's plan to contact the Muslim masses. On the other hand at Calicut, K. M. V. Muhammad Musaliar¹¹ and Moideen Koya endorsed the new Muslim-mass-contact scheme and urged the Muslims to join the Congress. The struggle started thus between the reactionary and the progressive forces in the Muslim community. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stated later, there were at the time more Muslims in the Congress than in the Muslim League so far as the Congress was no sectarian organisation.

Meanwhile, at the elections to the Malabar District Board held in April, thirty-one Congressmen had been returned unopposed; the Congress captured eight seats in the open elections, as well.¹² K. Kelappan was unanimously elected President of the District Board. The Board as well as the Municipal Council, Calicut, expressed their lack of confidence in the Interim Ministry. The Madras Advocates' Association and the majority of the Members of the Madras Legislative Assembly and Council also expressed themselves against the continuation of the Interim Ministry.

The All-India Congress Working Committee, meeting at Allahabad on 28 April approved of the action of the Congress Legislators in the matter of acceptance of office. The Committee had obtained legal advice to the effect that the Provincial Governor could give the required assurances demanded by the Congress even within the limits of the constitution which did not require to be

11. A Muslim Mass Contact Committee was formed under his leadership. He went to Pandikud in June, 1937 along with Muhammed Abdur Rahman but failed to influence the local Moplahs.

12. There were fifty-two seats in all.

amended for that purpose. They considered that the pronouncements made by the Secretary of State for India served only to misinterpret the policy of the Congress and failed to satisfy its requirements. Later in July, the Working Committee resolved at Wardha that in the light of the declarations made by Lord Zetland, Lord Stanley and the Viceroy, the Congressmen might be asked to form a Ministry in every Province where they had a majority. They should have an opportunity to carry out the promises made in the Election Manifesto and the constructive programme, though they would also oppose the new constitution from within. The whole nation applauded this decision of the Committee which might enable the Congress to rehabilitate the country by taking up the reins of administration.

Under these circumstances, C. Rajagopalachari formed on 14 July, 1937, his Ministry in Madras, in which K. Raman Menon from Malabar was included. That day was celebrated as the Ministry Formation Day throughout the Presidency. For the first time in the history of the Madras Legislature, *Vande Mataram* and *Jana Gana Mana* reverberated inside its walls. C. Rajagopalachari subsequently appealed to the Services for their co-operation and promised absolute impartiality in official conduct. Gandhiji, writing in the *Harijan*, under the caption "Congress Ministers," reminded them of the pledges of the Congress made to the nation.

The assumption of office marked a new phase in India's struggle for independence. The Congress found itself in the delicate position of carrying out the constructive and negative aspects of policy in a balanced manner, because the attempt to serve the people within the limits of the constitution was being combined with an effort to wreck the constitution from within.

CHAPTER 32

RISE OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

After the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1933 the leaders were released and some attention began to be paid to matters other than political. The economic depression, the sudden fall in prices and the enhanced levy of land revenue created a favourable atmosphere for the organisation of the peasants and workers in Malabar. At a meeting held at Calicut on 5 November, 1933, it was decided to organise the *Kerala Karshaka Sangha*¹ in every village in the District to safeguard the interests of agriculturists and bring their hardships to the notice of the Government. E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad who, during his imprisonment in the Vellore Jail for civil disobedience in 1932 had imbibed revolutionary ideas from the Bengal detainees and the Lahore Conspiracy Case prisoners, interested himself after his release in August, 1933 in the agitation for the remission of land tax in Malabar and was a prominent member of the Valluvanad Taluk Tax Payers' Association. When the latter body became defunct on the Government's grant of a partial remission, he organised in March, 1934 the Kerala Peasants' Association under his own presidentship.

The news of the revival of the Swarajya Party was received in the country with mixed feelings. The consensus of opinion among the leaders was certainly in favour of it but there were dissident groups who thought otherwise. At the conference of the Swarajya Party at Ranchi, M. R. Masani brought in an amendment² to Dr. B. C. Roy's resolution in regard to the objectives and programme of that party. Masani was of the view that peasants and labourers should be organised and thus enabled to participate in the fight not only against the British imperialism but also against the Indian capitalism, closely associated with it.

The Congressmen of Kerala met in conference at Calicut on 12 May, 1934, to survey the political situation in India. They

1. The resolution was moved by K. Madhava Menon, A. Committee was formed including Messrs. Manjeri Rama Iyer, U. Gopala Menon, K. P. Ramunni Menon, E. M. Shankaran Nambudiripad, Shankaranarayanan Embranthiri, N. A. Krishnan Nair, K. A. Keraleevan, P. E. Ramunni Nair, P. Krishna Panikkar, T. Hassan Koya Mulla, M. Ahmad and C. K. Govindan Nair.
2. It was supported by 26 members who attended the conference but rejected by a majority when put to vote.

desired to give shape to a new political programme for the Congress. They also adopted a resolution, initiated by Chandroth Kunhiraman Nair, to the effect that the Congress should accept the economic policy suggested by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and include the organisation of peasants and labourers on socialistic principles as an important item in its constructive programme.

After the conference referred to above, those Congressmen who were interested in socialism met together in the Town Hall, Calicut, under the presidentship of K. Kelappan. It was then resolved to form the Kerala Congress Socialist Party, the membership of which was restricted to Congressmen. The party would work within the Congress and persuade it to adopt socialistic principles and to organise peasants and workers on those lines. A committee was formed for this purpose with C. K. Govindan Nair as President, P. Krishna Pillai as Secretary and E. M. Shankaran Nambudiripad, P. Krishna Panikkar, K. P. Gopalan, H. Manjunatha Rao and P. Kumaran as members. Nambudiripad attended the All India Socialist Conference held in May 1934, as a delegate from Kerala.

At its meeting held in Bombay on 18 June, 1934, the All-India Congress Working Committee welcomed the rise of parties within the Congress representing different shades of opinion. It was, in their view, regrettable however that there was often irresponsible talk of the confiscation of private property without compensation and of the imperative need for class struggle. These ideas were far from the accepted principles of the Indian National Congress. The Working Committee reminded the people yet that it would be just to utilise private property in such a way as not to oppress the poor classes who had little property of their own. On 2 July, the Kerala Congress Socialist Party protested against these opinions expressed by the Congress Working Committee. Its Secretary, P. Krishna Pillai, was vehemently critical of the Congress leadership and its political programme which, he said, was inadequate to meet the country's requirements; Gandhiji and Gandhism had failed to organise the masses; it was useless in his view, to talk of khadi, Prohibition and anti-untouchability campaign as weapons to be used in a grim life-and-death struggle with imperialism. Gandhiji, he added, never tried to crush capitalism while the other leaders ignored the workers and peasants totally. The Socialist Party wanted the Congress to be a great organisation which would solely aim at the political and economic emancipation of the masses. It was suggested that neither the political workers who had no belief in economic emancipation nor the economic reformists who refused to meddle with political problems could lead the land to its goal. The Socialists looked upon economic

freedom as their goal and political struggle as their method. Their programme was to utilise the Congress for the benefit of Labour organisations, to give a fillip to the freedom struggle in the Princely States and to associate the freedom struggle of all oppressed people in the world with India's own national struggle. They thus wanted to capture power within the Congress and obtain a majority for those with socialistic outlook, in the elections to the various Congress bodies.

On 12 September, 1934, C. K. Govindan Nair resigned the presidentship as well as membership of the Socialist Party. Gandhiji stated that though the members of that party were of course selfless and noble, there were fundamental differences between their outlook and his; if they were ever to capture power in the Congress he, for one, could not remain in it any longer, for it was impossible for him to continue in that great organisation and at the same time carry on the agitation against the socialistic programme.

In regard to the new economic policy, K. Kelappan and other leaders had not bargained for such drastic changes as envisaged by the Socialists. The latter included enthusiastic young men to whom the complacent attitude and the apparent inertia of the older generation made no appeal. They were reluctant to vegetate in a state of frustrated resentment during a period of suspended agitation. The idealist young workers, therefore, began to concentrate their attention on the peasants and workers who had been unorganised hitherto.

The elections in August, 1934, to the various Congress bodies were keenly contested as the rift between the old and the new remained no longer hazy on the horizon. The Socialists tried to capture the strategic seats of power.³ The Socialist Party also came to have a newly elected committee in October, 1934 with E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad as President and P. Krishna Pillai as Secretary.⁴

The Socialist Conference at Benares on 1 October, 1934 condemned the parliamentary activities of the Congress as inadequate to achieve independence. On 13 October the first Kerala Congress

3. Six members out of nine in the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and five members out of eight in the All-India Congress Committee from Kerala were Socialists.

4. P. Kumaran was the Treasurer. The other members were Chandroth Kunhiraman Nair, A. K. Gopalan Nambiar, Moyarath Sankaran Nambiar, K. Kunhiraman Nambiar, P. Krishna Panikkar, H. Manjunatha Rao and K. P. Gopalan.

Socialist Party Conference was held at Calicut under the presidency of H. D. Raja. The Congress leadership and policy were attacked, and the demand for a Constituent Assembly was characterised as crying for the moon. Gandhiji was accused of transforming the Congress into an organisation of a few spinners. The opinion was expressed that only a constitution based on socialistic principles would serve the interests of the masses. The conference recorded sympathy with those who resisted exploitation, colonialism and capitalism and requested the Government to release all political prisoners immediately.⁵ It was resolved to draft a new constitution for India on socialistic principles. The Socialists, it was felt, should continue to remain as members of the Congress committees and propagate socialism as the parliamentary programme of the Congress could not be expected to strengthen it.

The socialist ascendancy was very much in evidence at the ordinary meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee held at Shoranur on 14 October, 1934. Under socialist persuasion it was resolved that the Provincial Congress Committee should organise the peasants and workers and work for their economic progress, as an important part of its programme of activity.⁶ The emergence of the Kerala Congress Socialist Party was formally welcomed through a resolution at that meeting⁷ which saw a definite deviation from Gandhian ideas on several matters.

On the eve of the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress, the Congress Socialist Conference took place at Bombay under the presidency of Babu Sampurnanand to define the Party's goal and programme. In December E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad was elected as the Joint Secretary of the Socialist Party. In January, 1935 he started and edited the *Prabhatham*, a Vernacular Weekly that was the organ of the Party.^{8a} In the same year he also published a book in Malayalam entitled '1917', giving a short account of the Russian Revolution.

The series of Labour strikes in Feroke, Calicut, Pinarayi and Pappinisseri in Malabar in the early months of 1935 were utilised by the Socialist leaders in Kerala to tighten their grip over the workers and organise them through the observance of Labour

5. K. Madhavanar opposed this resolution moved by P. Krishna Pillai.

6. K. A. Keraleeyan moved this resolution.

7. This was on the initiative of K. P. Gopalan.

8a. It ceased publication in the middle of August as he did not furnish the security demanded by the District Magistrate because of its 'objectionable' tone.

Protest Day, huge Labour rallies, study classes etc. Labour in mills and factories came to have separate unions and Labour unrest became a normal feature of industrial life in several places. The Government served notice on the Socialist leaders on 2 March, 1935 under section 144 prohibiting them from holding public meetings at the trouble-spots. The Socialists organised the peasants also and held an Agriculturists' Conference in April at Shoranur.

The tussle in the Congress ranks between the right wing and the socialists was becoming more and more evident, especially after the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held at Jubbalpore on 25 April, 1935. In Malabar, the socialists, who were mostly young men, definitely captured power within the Congress, though they did not utilise such power and opportunity as they gained to implement the Congress programme fully. Their policy appeared to be not to oppose the decisions of the All-India Congress but yet implement only those items in the Congress programme in which alone they had faith. They were not attached to khadi or Harijan movement or Council entry but only to the organisation of Labour. The old guard appeared to have withdrawn from the field. Such a state of affairs would pull the Congress down, it was felt; the *Mathrubhumi* was of the view⁸ that the socialists could have formed a separate party to put their ideas into effect and yet co-operated with the Congress in its general activities. One of the reasons for the inner conflicts of the Congress was the lack of a fighting policy. It was essential to give a new orientation to its programme.

When the Kerala Socialist Conference met at Calicut on 27 May, 1935 under M. R. Masani's presidentship a resolution⁹ was passed to the effect that India should not offer her co-operation in any war in which British might be involved and that every effort should be made to make the country fit for independence. The Kerala Provincial Labour Conference held at Calicut also had passed a similar resolution on the previous day. E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad now became the General Secretary while P. K. Ramunni Nair was the Secretary of the Socialist Party.

The eighth Kerala Provincial Conference was held at Calicut on 28 May, 1935, under the presidentship of S. A. Brelvi. It was dominated by the socialists. The attendance was thin, even leaders being absent, though previous Provincial Conferences used

8. The *Mathrubhumi* 8 May, 1935.

9. The resolution was moved by H. Manjunatha Rao. K. Madhavanar moved an amendment to the effect that in case Britain would be in war, India should utilise that opportunity for winning her own freedom. The amendment was rejected and the original resolution passed.

to be largely attended by people, mostly from rural areas. In spite of some opposition the resolutions adopted at the Provincial Conference were identical with those passed at the Socialist Conference. Brelvi tried successfully to bridge the gulf that separated the two wings in the Congress. A compromise was worked out. In the new Working Committee, half of the seats should go to the Socialists; and Secretary or Convener of the Labour section in the Congress should be a Socialist. The Socialist members of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee would not do any propaganda against the Congress programme and the Congressmen, on their part, should not attack the policy of the Socialists.

During the month of June 1935, informal meetings between the Congress Moderates and Congress Socialists resulted in the Congress Working Committee being remodelled in Kerala. The new Committee was equally composed of Moderates and Socialists, some of the latter being men who were involved in strikes. Several meetings were held in Malabar to wind up the recruiting campaign of the Congress, 5000 members having been already enrolled in the District. At the South Malabar Political Conference held at Palghat in the latter half of June, 1935, an appeal was made for unity in the ranks of the Congress.¹⁰

The Congress Socialists in Kerala organised study classes to give political education to the masses in their own way. In July, 1935 K. Madhavanar was expelled from the Socialist Party probably because he had opposed some of the resolutions sponsored by the Party at the Political Conference. The Party continued to do steady propaganda in the villages. E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad toured the different parts of Malabar and successfully organised Taluk Congress Socialist Parties at five centres. He took a keen interest in the organisation of Labour and Peasant Conferences as well. He attended the Executive Committee meetings of the Socialist Party at Nagpur and Banares and the Socialist Conference held at Guntur. The left-wing criticism of the Congress went on unabated and at the first Kerala Radical Political Conference convened by Nambudiripad^{10a} in December, 1935 there

10. Fortnightly Report sent by the Government of Madras to the Government of India for the second half of June, 1935.

10a. In 1936 Mr. Nambudiripad lost his seat in the All India Congress Committee. He attended the All India Socialist Conference held at Meerut and the Tamil Nad Conference at Karaikudi. Later in February, 1937 a consignment of Communist literature was seized from his house. He worked as the Provincial Secretary of the mass contact organisation and took part in the Labour Union and Ryots' Conferences held at Calicut and Etakkazhiyur.

was uncompromising opposition to the parliamentary programme. The Youth and Labour Protection Leagues tried to influence the workers and peasants.

The Malabar District Congress Committee, dominated by the Socialists, met at the *Sakti Mandiram*, Thikkoti, on 15 March, 1936 and expressed dissatisfaction with the readiness of the Congress leaders to accept office as it would take the wind out of the sails of the struggle for freedom. A few members were now appointed to organise committees in towns and Taluks in the District and enrol a large number of members.¹¹ On the whole the Socialists were quite happy that the new President of the Congress, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was not hostile to socialist ideas and they hoped that under his leadership they would be able to free not only the country from foreign yoke but also the peasants and workers from capitalist exploitation and economic misery.

In December, 1936, action was taken by the Government against A. K. Gopalan Nambiar in connection with the allegedly 'seditious' speeches delivered by him in the course of *jathas* in Kurumbranad and Kottayam Taluks as well as the 'hunger march' to Madras; his speech delivered on 30 July, 1936, at Salem was considered as most offensive.¹² His aim had been to draw the attention of the Government of Madras to the prevailing poverty in Malabar. He was sentenced to nine months' simple imprisonment by the Additional District Magistrate, Malabar. Charges of sedition were framed also against Chandroth Kunhiraman

11 V. M. Vishnu Bharateeyan (Chirakkal); Chandroth Kunhiraman Nair (Kottayam); T. C. Narayana Kurup (Kurumbranad); A. K. Gopalan Nambiar (Wynad); N. C. Shekhar (Calicut); K. C. Gopalan Unni (Valluvanad); N. Guruvayurappan (Palghat); P. M. Krishna Menon (Ernad) and K. Shankaranarayanan (Ponnani); Almost all of them were socialists.

12. On his return from Madras he led a batch of about 16 volunteers, called the 'Hunger Marchers' going on foot from village to village in the Taluks of Chirakkal and Kurumbranad and carrying on intense agitation against the Government. He made critical speeches at Orkattiri, Purameri, Kallachi, Kuttiadi, Paleri, Kallode, Badagara, Kuttuparamba, Cheruvannur and other places. He was accused of bringing the Government to hatred and contempt. As the President of the North Malabar Unemployed Union he was asked to keep the peace for one year under section 108 clause (a) of the Criminal Procedure Code. But he refused to furnish the security required of him. (G. O. No. 30 dated 6 January 1937 (Conf.). See also the *Hind*: dated 30-10-1936.

Nair.¹³ K. P. Gopalan and K. A. Keraleeyan. Security for good behaviour was demanded of them; on their refusal to pay it they were sentenced to simple imprisonment for one year by the Joint Magistrate, Tellicherry.

The Government's attempt to check the Socialists led to the holding of several political meetings to protect against it. The Malabar District Political Conference was held at Ottapalam on 29 November, 1936, under the presidentship of Sardar Sardul Singh Cavasheer.¹⁴ A resolution was passed on the line to be adopted by the Socialist group in the Congress. Next month, at the time of the Faizpur session of the Congress, the third Socialist Conference also was convened at the same place under the presidentship of Jaya Prakesh Narain. In his message to that conference, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made it clear that socialist ideas might be made practicable only according to the circumstances prevalent in India; their interpretation should be understandable from an average Indian's view-point as otherwise it would turn out to be ineffective.

On 25 April, 1937 the All-Kerala Labour Conference¹⁵ was held at Trichur, attended by several delegates from Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. P. Krishna Pillai hoisted the red flag with hammer and sickle on the occasion. One of the resolutions passed was to congratulate the Soviet Government for having tackled the problems of unemployment and hunger successfully. The success of the Russian economic policy was, it was claimed, due to the fight waged by the exploited people, led by Labour, against capitalism and imperialism. India, stated a second resolution, should never participate in any war provoked by imperialists but ought to utilise such an opportunity for winning her own freedom. By a third resolution, the conference called upon all Labour Unions

13. He was a member of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and also of the *jatha* of 'Hunger Marchers' in Kottayam Taluk in October, 1936. His speeches at Tellicherry, Dharmadam, Pazhassi, Mattanur and other places were considered seditious in character. (See the *Hindu* date: 27-11-1936.)

14. The venue was named after P. Ramuani Menon who, on the occasion of the first Kerala Provincial Conference at Ottapalam in 1921, had been assaulted severely by the police. The conference was inaugurated by Mrs. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya. E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Muthuranga Mudaliar, Mr. B. Sambamurthy and Mr. T. Prakasam participated in the discussions.

15. It was presided over by Balliwala of Bombay. V. Andrew Thattil was the Chairman of the Reception Committee.

in Kerala to join the All-India Trade Union Congress. A separate Trade Union Congress for Kerala was demanded, P. Krishna Pillai was authorised to convene, otherwise, a conference of Labour Unions in Kerala during the next year and to organise an All-Kerala Committee in which every local union with a minimum of one hundred members and with a standing of at least one year would have one representative.

The Socialists were against the acceptance of office by the Congress Party. They, therefore, opposed the resolution on the subject passed by the All-India Congress Working Committee at Delhi on 15 March, 1937. Later, on 20 June, when the fourth Congress Socialist Party Conference took place at Cannanore, under the presidentship of Yusuf Meherally¹⁶, the statements issued by Gandhiji and C. Rajagopalachari on the acceptance of office were condemned as derogatory to the idea of wrecking the new constitution and contrary to India's right to self-determination and complete independence. It was decided to mobilise public opinion in favour of strengthening the struggle against the new constitution. The Socialists expressed their confidence in the foreign policy of Soviet Russia as conducive to the preservation of world peace and emphasised the need to establish Anti-War Committees in the land so as to enlighten the masses about the evil consequences of an imperialist war. They demanded that the Indian masses must have continuous share in the fight against imperialism as well as in the decision on policy regarding it. It was heartening that the Faizpur session of the Congress had decided to help the growth of its various committees at the lower levels. The leaders of the Congress were asked to recognise the importance of the different bodies through

16. He was Joint-Secretary of the All-India Congress Socialist Party. He toured Malabar in June, 1937, at the invitation of the Kerala Socialist leaders and others. He deplored the communal approach to political problems and made an appeal for strengthening the Socialist group in the Indian National Congress. He addressed gatherings at Balia-patam, Tellicherry, Badagara and Quilandy. An order was served on him under section 144 C.P.C. on 25 June prohibiting his speeches in South Malabar. He disobeyed it the next day by addressing a public meeting at Calicut. He was arrested under section 64 C. P. C. Protest meetings were thereupon held at several places in Malabar including Mannarghat and Thiruvannur. The Working Committee of the Kerala Provincial Congress also passed a resolution protecting against the arrest. He was later sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment and taken to the Central Jail, Cannanore. In pursuance of the general policy of the Government, however, he was released in July, 1937, along with some other prisoners.

which the strength and the fighting spirit of the masses expressed themselves.

The Volunteer Movement in Malabar which started with the Congress Socialist Volunteers Training Camp at Tikkoti in June, 1938 was reported to be steadily growing. There was organised effort for training Congress volunteers, Muslim volunteers, Labour volunteers and Peasant Union volunteers. The two latter bodies were organised under the red flag.

CHAPTER 33

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES IN THE CONGRESS SINCE 1929

As already stated elsewhere, the strength of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee had been reduced from 10 to 75 in 1925. Kerala had been originally divided into five Congress Districts, their headquarters being fixed at Tellicherry, Calicut, Palghat, Cochin and Trivandrum respectively; in 1925, Travancore was further divided into four units in view of its large size and population.

After the famous Congress session at Lahore when independence was accepted as the goal of the Indian nationalist movement new members came to be actively enrolled in the Congress, committees of which were organised throughout the land for that purpose. With the beginning of the Salt Satyagraha in 1930 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, like others, was authorised to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. Its President was empowered, in case it could not meet, to nominate the members of the Working Committee in place of those who might be arrested, and also to nominate his successor, with similar power. The Presidents of the local committees also were delegated with the same authority.

On 9 March, 1930 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee appointed a Sub-Committee¹ to organise effective propaganda in favour of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Malabar. Next month another committee was appointed by it to be in charge of the organisation and control of the movement.² A War Council or Satyagraha Committee was formed on 3 April, 1930.

On 17 May, 1930 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Payyannur when K. Madhavan Nair was elected as its President in the place of K. Kelappan. P. K. Kunhisankara Menon became the Secretary. A committee was now constituted to organise khadi work in Kerala in response to the increasing demand of the

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1. The President of the Sub-Committee was K. Kelappan. K. Nilakantan Nambudiripad, K. Madhavanar, Moyarath Shankaran Nambiar and P. K. Kunhisankara Menon were its members.
 2. The committee consisted of K. Kelappan, T. R. Krishna Swamy Iyer, Moyarath Shankaran Nambiar and P. Gopalan. K. T. Kunhiraman Nambiar was appointed to be in charge of the organisation and control of the Satyagraha movement.

people.³ It was also resolved to organise a District Congress Committee in Travancore.

On the subsequent arrest of P. K. Kunhisankara Menon, Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad was elected on 1 June, 1930 as the Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. On the arrest of K. Madhavan Nair, T. Hassan Koya Mulla stepped into his shoes as President. Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma was co-opted as a member of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee besides Mrs. Gracy Aaron, Mrs. U. Gopala Menon, Mrs. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, K. Raman Menon, Syed Mohammed and M. P. Govinda Menon, were the other members.⁴

Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, on his arrest, was succeeded by Syed Mohamed as Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Committee.

In September, 1930 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee appointed committees to intensify khadi work in Kerala, spread the message of the Congress in remote villages and issue certificates to those merchants who dealt in pure swadeshi goods.

T. Hassan Koya Mulla, on his arrest nominated C. Samuel Aaron as the next President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. By a notification subsequently issued by the Government on 6 December, 1930 the Provincial Congress Committee and the Congress War Council at Calicut were both declared to be unlawful associations under section 16 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act as amended by the Devolution Act of 1920. The police also raided the Congress Committee Office functioning in the *Mathrubhumi* Buildings at Calicut. On 11 December the Provincial Congress Committee and the War Council were dissolved and P. Madhavan was appointed as the first Dictator to be in charge of the Satyagraha Movement, with power to nominate his successor in case of his arrest. Then followed the period of Dictators, the details regarding which have been referred to elsewhere.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March, 1931, restored the political situation to the normal. Mrs. Margaret Pavamani, the seventh

3. This committee consisted of K. Kunhikelu Nambiar, C. Samuel Aaron, (Treasurer), C. H. Govindan Nambiar (Convener), E. K. Sankara Varma Raja, K. Nilakantan Nambudiripad, M. Krishna Gownden, K. Uppl Sahib, (M.L.A.), Vallabhadas Purushotham, T. Hassan Koya Mulla, K. Madhavan Nair and K. Raman Menon.

4. P. Moideen Koya, K. Raman Menon and A. K. Kunhikrishnan Nambiar and Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma were elected as members of the Working Committee in Kerala, in places rendered vacant by the imprisonment of the leaders.

Dictator, nominated a new Provincial Congress Committee as an emergency measure for there was little time to conduct the elections in Kerala before the impending session of the All-India Congress at Karachi. The New Committee included fifty-nine members, tried veterans as well as fresh aspirants. At its meeting at Calicut on 15 March, 1931 a new Working Committee was constituted. It included K. Kelappan (President), K. Madhavanar (Secretary), T. V. Sundara Iyer (Treasurer), P. K. Kunhisankara Menon, K. Nilakantan Nambudiripad, C. H. Govindan Nambiar, Muhammad Abdur Rahman and Smt. Kartyayani Amma. A committee was separately constituted to chalk out the future programme of action.

On 16 April, 1931 a meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was convened at Calicut under the presidentship of K. Kelappan. It was resolved to appoint a separate committee in each Taluk for the effective picketing of liquor shops and foreign-cloth shops as well as a propaganda committee for the whole of Kerala. There was also to be an Untouchability Committee to promote Harijan welfare. Subordinate Congress committees were formed even in remote villages.

In May, 1931 new elections were conducted to the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee⁵ and other bodies. The Village Committees were to elect the members of the Taluk Committee which would in turn elect those of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committees. K. Kelappan appealed to the votes to the Provincial Congress Committee to give adequate representation to the Muslims, the Christians, the depressed classes, etc., in the elections.

Keen competition was in evidence in the election. K. Kelappan became the President of the new Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, Hassan Koya Mulla the Vice-President and K. A. Damodara Menon and Syed Mohamed, the secretaries.⁶ The new body met at Calicut on 28 June, 1931. They appointed a committee to do propaganda in favour of temple entry

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5. In 1931 the membership in the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was distributed in the following manner: Travancore 24; Cochin 8; Ponnani 2; Valluvanad 4; Palghat 3; Calicut 2; Ernad 2; Wynad 2; Kurumbranad 2; Kottayam 2; Chirakal 2; Hosdrug 2. Besides, the District Committees of North Malabar, Central Malabar, South Malabar, Cochin and Travancore were to elect four members each. Thus there were seventy-five members.
 6. J. Raman Menon was the Treasurer. The other members of the Working Committee were K. Madhavan Nair, P. Achuthan, K. Nilakantan Nambudiripad, V. Sankaranarayana Menon, P. K. Kunhisankara Menon, Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma and Smt P. M. Kamalavathi.

in Malabar and Cochin;⁷ a second committee to consider the amendments to the rules of the Provincial Congress Committee,⁸ and a third one to write a history of the Satyagraha Movement.⁹ On 19 July, 1931 the new Working Committee of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee resolved to organise an All-Kerala *Hindustan Seva Dal*, and constituted a committee¹⁰ for the purpose. They requested the general body of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee to launch the Temple Entry Satyagraha Movement in Malabar.

At its meeting held at Calicut on 2 August, 1931 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee decided to contest the elections to the Local Boards and the Municipalities. They condemned¹¹ the growing tendency in the country to resort to violence and assassination, with special reference to the shooting of Sir Ernest Hodson, Governor of Bombay, and the murder of Mr. Garlick, and emphasised their deep faith in non-violence. The differences of opinion among the members that characterised this meeting was in evidence, in wider proportion, also at the meeting of the same body in Guruvayur on 5 September, 1931. Though it was patched up temporarily the seed of conflict in the Congress ranks was already sown.¹² The members of the Kerala Congress Working Committee representing the old guard tendered their resignation *en block*, inviting younger members to take their place. L. S. Prabhu became the new President.

Consequent to the Viceregal ordinances issued on 3 January, 1932 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and its working Committee were dissolved, apart from all the subordinate organisations, as they were declared to be unlawful bodies. The President,

7. K. Kelappan, P. Achutnan, K. Nilakantan Nambudiripad, Smt. M. Kariyayani Amma and C. Kuttan Nair were members of the Committee.
8. The Committee consisted of K. Kelappan, K. A. Damodara Menon U. Gopala Menon and Syed Mohamed.
9. K. Madhavan Nair, U. Gopala Menon, Syed Mohamed and P. K. Kunhisankara Menon.
10. K. Ramaa Menon, F. C. Kunhikannan Nambiar and P. Madhavan
11. The resolution, moved by Madhavanar, was opposed by P. Krishna Pillai who stated that violence on the part of non-congressmen might not be condemned. It was however passed, 13 voting for and 12 against.
12. There had been difference of opinion regarding the use of khadi and the advisability of launching the Temple Entry Movement which might deflect the normal course of nationalist activity. The split found expression in the choice of the Chairman of the Municipal Council, Calicut, and the various unpleasant attacks and counter-attacks in the press.

L. S. Prabhu, came to be nominated as the first Dictator during the emergency in Kerala, with power to nominate his successor in case of his arrest. The office of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was shifted elsewhere from the *Mathrubhumi* Buildings at Calicut.

In May, 1934 C. Rajagopalachari was deputed to re-organise the work of the Congress in Kerala also, along with that in Tamil Nad and Andhra Pradesh. On 13 June, the ban on the Congress committees in Kerala was lifted by the Government of Madras. Thereupon the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Calicut on 19 June, under the chairmanship of K. Raman Menon. It was proposed on that occasion that only a person who could devote his entire time for Congress work should be elected as the President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. The proposal was rejected on the basis of the rule that any member of the Committee could be chosen as President. Thus U. Gopala Menon was chosen as the President. To organise propaganda effectively in Kerala and to enrol new members, workers were appointed for each Taluk in Malabar and for Cochin and Travancore.

There was keen competition to the elections to the various Congress bodies in Malabar and in September, 1934 Smt. C. Kunhikavu Amma was elected by a majority as the President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. C. K. Govindan Nair and E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad became the Secretaries.

At the first Kerala Congress Socialist Party Conference held at Calicut on 13 October, 1934 it had been resolved to remove the four-anna membership of the Congress. Of course it would involve heavy financial responsibility for the Congress, though a few persons believed that the collection of donations for the Congress fund was preferable to taxing every member of the organisation. Subsequently when the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee held a special meeting at Shoranur on 14 October, a resolution¹³ was passed that the membership fee of Rs. 3 of the members of the Provincial Committee should be abolished. It was also resolved¹⁴ that the headquarters of the Committee might be shifted from Calicut to any place as desired by that body. At the ordinary meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, P. Krishna Pillai proposed that the amendments to the Congress constitution proposed by Gandhiji were not acceptable. V. Sankaranarayana Menon moved that Mr. Pillai's resolution should be divided into four separate parts and voted upon. Accordingly, a resolution was

13 It was moved by Chandroth Kunhiraman Nair. Fifteen members voted for and six against the resolution.

14. This resolution was initiated by V. Sankaranarayana Menon.

considered that Gandhiji's suggestion to change the Congress's "just and peaceful method" into "truthful and non-violent method" was unacceptable;¹⁵ it was passed by a majority vote. Secondly a resolution was passed against the constitutional provision that one could exercise franchise in Congress elections only if one had been wearing khadi continuously for six months; a third resolution was against the prescribed quantity of yarn to be spun by every Congressman; fourthly it was resolved that the proposal to reduce the number of Congress representatives from 6000 to 1000 was unacceptable. Of course these resolutions were ultimately passed, not without opposition on the part of a few members. Yet another resolution, passed by a majority, required the All-India Congress Committee to remove the four-anna membership fee as well as the insistence on the wearing of khadi so as to enable the peasants and workers to join the Congress in large numbers.¹⁶ A resolution moved by T. N. Ramunni Menon that for the effective organisation of Congress work the Province should be divided into *firkas*, each in charge of a paid worker and that a committee should be appointed to collect funds for the Congress was rejected. The attention of Congressmen engaged in *swadeshi* propaganda was drawn to the decision made by the All-India Congress Working Committee at its meeting at Benaras on 27 July, 1934 to the effect that no Congressman should wear anything other than hand-spun and hand-woven khadi and that organised industries receiving aid from the Government might not require the assistance of the Congress. There was a heated discussion over this issue which finally was passed, fourteen voting for and thirteen against it. Another resolution requesting the All-India Congress Committee to permit the Kerala Provincial Committee to organise work in Cochin and Travancore in connection with the elections to the Panchayats, Municipalities and Legislatures was defeated. It was resolved that the offices of the Kerala Provincial Committee might be kept at Shoranur for one year. Smt. C. Kunhikavu Amma, President, in winding up the discussions pointed out that it was not safe for the country to deviate from the Gandhian ideas or drop the tried pilot in midstream.

The Congress in its forty-eighth session in Bombay towards the end of October, 1934 decided that no Congressman could continue as member in two identical committees at the same time. A Sub-Committee of fifteen, appointed to draft the amendments to the Congress constitution on the lines suggested by Gandhiji, made certain proposals. Accordingly no Provincial Congress Committee

15. 16 members voted for it and 10 against it. A few remained neutral.

16. This was proposed by P. Krishna Pillai and supported by eighteen members.

should have more than one hundred members; the annual session of the Indian National Congress was to be attended by two thousand delegates who would elect the President. The President could choose the members of the Working Committee himself. The Working Committee would decide on the number of members in the All-India Congress Committee from each Province.

On the resignation of Smt. C. Kunhikavu Amma, M. P. Narayana Menon came to be elected on 29 December, 1934 as the new President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee which on that day met at Cannanore. Labour problem began to loom large at this time as the study classes organised by the Socialists had awakened the workers in various factories; and the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee demanded the regulation of the hours of work in them. But in due course the Congressmen of the right wing failed to give full support to the Labour strikes and they even looked upon them with alarm, in so far as they were likely to divert the popular attention from the political goal and alienate the sympathy of the employers, the majority of whom used to help the Congress always with men and money.

On 24 February, 1935 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee appointed a committee to investigate the question of the formation of Kerala State. M. P. Narayana Menon resigned the President's office next month¹⁷ and A. K. Gopalan Nambiar stepped into his place as President.

As noted already, S. A. Brelvi was able to effect an agreement between the right wing and the predominant Socialist Party in the Congress¹⁸ at the time of the eighth Kerala Provincial Conference at Calicut in May, 1935. All the members and office-bearers in the Working Committee should resign accordingly at the next meeting of the Kerala Provincial Committee and a new Committee would be formed including the representatives of both the sections. There

17 He resigned at the meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee on 17 March 1935. C. K. Govindan Nair, E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad, V. Sankaranarayana Menon and P. Eumaran also resigned their places in the working Committee. K. P. Gopalan and P. Krishna Panikkar became the Secretaries of the new Committee, and E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad, its Treasurer.

18. At this time all the members of the Working Committee (Kerala) were Socialists except one. The agreement was signed by K. Kelappan, P. K. Kunhisankara Menon, K. Madhava Menon, U. Gopala Menon, V. Sankaranarayana Menon and those representing the Socialist wing including E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad, H. Manjunatha Rao and K. P. Gopalan.

would be no President for the new Committee, the General Secretary being in charge of the work of the President and the Secretary at the same time. The General Secretary was to be of the right wing. The Socialists would dominate one half of the Working Committee and a Socialist would be the Secretary or Convener of the Labour section in the Congress. In all matters concerning Labour, particularly disputes and strikes, action was to be taken only on the advice of the entire Working Committee. The two wings should not in future do any propaganda against each other. On these lines a new Working Committee with no President was constituted for Kerala on 30 May, 1935. K. Raman Menon became the General Secretary.¹⁹

When the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Calicut on 30 September, 1935 under the chairmanship of Mrs A. V. Kuttimalu Amma, a committee was appointed to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Indian National Congress in a fitting manner; and another committee, including A. K. Pillai, was formed to write the history of the Congress in Kerala to be published during the jubilee celebrations. It was decided, after a heated debate, to present certificates to the Congress volunteers who fought for freedom on the same occasion. A Board was to be constituted for organising work in Malabar in connection with the forthcoming elections to the Madras Legislature.

Rajendra Prasad, President of the Congress, visited Malabar and Cochin during December, 1935. He expressed the desire that popular enthusiasm should be devoted more and more to the eradication of untouchability, khadi work and the revival of cottage industries.

On 16 December, 1935 when the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Calicut, K. Raman Menon resigned his office as General Secretary on personal grounds whereupon Shyamji Sundardas was for the time being, elected to the office. The Committee held a special meeting later on 13 January, 1936 to consider the Labour strikes existing at the time. Without expressing any opinion on the merits of the case, they decided to render all possible help to the families of those who struck work.

It was decided that the elections to the Provincial Legislatures should be contested and the question of acceptance of office might

19. The other members in the Working Committee were. P. Krishna Pillai (Labour); P. Krishna Panikkar (Agriculture); E. M. Sankaran Nambuthiripad, A. K. Gopalan Nambiar, K. P. Gopalan, M. Panku Menon, M. Govinda Menon, V. Sankaranarayana Menon and P. K. Kunhisankara Menon and Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma.

be decided at a special session of the All-India Congress Committee. On 15 May, 1936 the Kerala Working Committee constituted the Parliamentary Committee consisting of six members.²⁰ Subsequently, on 27 June, the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee also constituted a Civic Board for election work. This Board was to work under the supervision of the Provincial Congress Committee, its members being Congressmen. They would select the candidates to represent the Congress in the elections to the Legislature, Local Boards and Municipalities. The wearing of khadi was made a necessary qualification for the candidates.

The meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee held at Calicut on 2 August, 1936 was characterised by severe group rivalry and heated discussions.²¹ It met under the chairmanship of Dr. A. R. Menon. K. Madhava Menon was elected to the Madras Congress Parliamentary Board in spite of some opposition. The Committee decided to take disciplinary action against the Malabar District Congress Committee by dissolving it on the basis of six charges framed against it. The latter body was accused of flouting the resolutions passed, and the notifications issued, by the Kerala Provincial Committee, doing propaganda against it and passing resolutions claiming equality with or even superiority over it, all which was grossly violative of discipline.²² A motion of no-confidence moved by P. Krishna Pillai against K. Raman Menon who meanwhile had again been elected as the General Secretary, was rejected by a majority.

20 They were R. Raghava Menon, K. Raman Menon, K. P. Gopalan, C. K. Govindan Nair, V. Sankaranarayana Menon and P. Krishna Panikkar.

21 At a previous meeting of the Committee, it was said, A. K. Pillai had indulged in unruly behaviour and walked out in protest when an amendment proposed by him was ruled out of order by K. Madhava Menon who was occupying the chair. The Committee condemned Mr. Pillai's action as tantamount to contempt of its own authority. There was for some time prolonged controversy over this issue in the columns of the *Mathrubhumi*. There was some tussle between the Socialists and others at the meeting held on 2 August over the minutes of the previous meeting which finally were passed in spite of opposition. Moyerath Sankaran Nambiar brought a no-confidence motion against the chairman, Dr. A. R. Menon, for not conducting the meeting properly. This was rejected.

22 This motion was moved by P. K. Kunhisankara Menon, subsequently the District Congress Committee appealed to the All-India Working Committee. As advised by that body, the former expressed regret to the Kerala Provincial Committee and the order of dissolution was cancelled. The Malabar District Congress Committee had been more or less dominated by the Socialists at this time.

The split within the Congress between the Rightists and the leftists added to its weakness; at the elections to the Madras Legislature action had to be taken against a few Congressmen²³ who had opposed the official Congress candidates.

The Congress in Kerala came to have a new Working Committee by June, 1937. The new President was K. Raman Menon.²⁴ A meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee took place on 13 June, 1937 at which it was resolved that the portion of the South Kanara District extending upto the Netravati river in the North should be added to Kerala. But as the matter was disputed by the Congress leaders of South Kanara a committee²⁵ was formed to negotiate and effect a settlement until which there was to be no demonstration of any kind. Another committee was constituted for enrolling as many Muslims as possible as members of the Congress.²⁶

As we survey the period, 1930-38, we notice that unity and solidarity which had characterised the Congress organisation during the days of the Civil Disobedience Movement were tending to disappear gradually. Personal jealousies and petty rivalries seem to have influenced the action of some of the leaders in Malabar. The strong sense of fraternity and idealism carved out of the bitterness of the freedom struggle and the exigencies of a national emergency were no longer there. The old guard rested on oars, attracted by the idea of office acceptance while the impatient youth showed a tendency to deviate from the Gandhian path and organise peasantry and Labour as a militant and murmuring class. The organisational changes within the Congress represented the growing strength of the Left wing. The constitutional phase of the activity of the Indian National Congress that had succeeded the agitational phase continued for some more time until Herr Hitler shook the foundations of the uneasy world peace in 1939.

23. They were Messrs. V. P. Narayanan Nambiar, K. Gopalan Nambiar, C. P. Madhavan Nair, M. Panku Menon and Dr. A. R. Menon. The first three gentlemen had contested the elections, opposing the official Congress candidates. The other two gentlemen did not offer themselves as candidates but it was alleged that they were supporting C. P. Madhavan Nair. Under orders from the President of the Congress they were prohibited from continuing as members in any body of the Congress for two years.

24. K. Madhava Menon was chosen as Secretary and Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma as Treasurer while the other members were Dr. M. K. Menon, A. C. Raman, P. Krishna Pillai and E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad.

25. E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad and K. T. Kunhiraman Nambiar, Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee.

26. K. Muhammad Musaliar, Muhammad Abdur Rahman, P. C. Sankar, P. Krishna Pillai, S. Khalifa and E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad.

CHAPTER 34

CONSTRUCTIVE WORK IN KERALA

One healthy feature of the national movement in Kerala during the period under review was the devotion of the patriots to active constructive work.

(1) *Khadi and Swadeshi*

Khadi and *Swadeshi* were naturally important aspects of nationalist work in Kerala as in other parts of India. The khadi movement was sponsored by Gandhiji in 1921 in his fight against foreign cloth and it appeared as the most significant item in his political programme. He looked upon khadi work as the foundation of India's economic freedom that would make her teeming villages, steeped in poverty, smile in prosperity. He realised that the villagers remained without work and under financial stress during several months in the year. In 1923 a Khadi Board for every Congress Province was organised. In order to supervise and control the activities of these Provincial Boards an All-India Khadi Board also came to be established. An amount of Rs. 15,000 was sanctioned by the All-India Board for work in Kerala. A few enthusiasts, devoted to khadi work, were sent to the Sabarmati *ashram* to receive the necessary training in khadi production work. Khadi sales depots were opened at Cochin, Trichur, Palghat and Calicut.

Gandhiji wanted to free the Provincial Khadi Boards, working as the organs of the Indian National Congress, from political influence of any kind. So in 1925 the All-India Charka *Sangh* (Spinners' Association) was formed as an organisation, completely independent of the Congress or its activities. The Congress thereupon gave the fund in its possession, ear-marked for the khadi work, to the new body, the sole object of which was the production and propagation of khadi all over India. Under these circumstances the Kerala Khadi Board merged into the new All-India Spinners' Association.

Great efforts were made by Kurur Nilakantan Nambuthiripad, C. H. Govindan Nambiar, N. Krishnan Nair, M. Kunhandy and Dr. M. E. Naidu to popularise khadi in the three units of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. In 1926 the first khadi shop, managed by K. V. Vellodi and Brothers, was ceremoniously opened by C. Rajagopalachari at Calicut. The propaganda tour undertaken by Gandhiji in 1927 and by C. Rajagopalachari and

Jamnalal Bajaj in 1928 gave a great impetus to the khadi movement in Malabar.¹ C. H. Govindan Nambiar strained every nerve in the early days to make the khadi movement successful in Taliparamba, Payyannur and other places in North Malabar while Kunhandy confined himself to Calicut and its neighbourhood. The khadi sales depot at Trivandrum came into being in 1928. The depot functioning at Trichur was subsequently shifted to Ernakulam, though the active work of Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad in the former town had been quite effective in winning new devotees to the cause of khadi. As a result the depot, originally functioning at Cochin, was abolished.

At this time the khadi work in Kerala was being carried on under the control of the Tamil Nad branch of the Spinners' Association and it showed very little progress. The khadi production centre at Taliparamba where constructive work had been most vigorous was even abolished. But it had to be necessarily reopened in 1929 under the continued pressure of the khadi lovers of Malabar. After some time this centre was shifted from Taliparamba to Payyannur, the people of which area appeared to be more khadi-conscious than the former. Ever since, Payyannur continued to remain as one of the best khadi producing centres in South India. Meanwhile a new production centre was opened also at Nagercoil in South Travancore, where a private sales depot had already been functioning on the initiative of Dr. M. E. Naidu.

Meanwhile the boycott of the Simon Commission indirectly led to that of foreign cloth as well. In accordance with a resolution of the Congress Working Committee at Calcutta on 3 January, 1929, Gandhiji prepared a scheme for the boycott of foreign cloth. On the basis of another resolution, a Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee was formed, with Gandhiji as its Chairman, to conduct a vigorous campaign for the boycott of foreign cloth and for the popularisation of the use of khadi. The great bonfire of foreign cloth at Sraddhananda Park in Calcutta on 4 March, 1929 resulted in the prosecution of Gandhiji, Kiren Sankar Roy, Secretary of the Bengal Congress Committee, and others. It served only to

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1. It is interesting to note that at first khadi attracted only a few. In 1925 when S. Satyamurthy visited Calicut he agreed to address the students of the Zamorin's College on condition that at least twenty-five among them should give him a signed assurance that they would wear only khadi thenceforth. The Student Secretary of the College Union, Kizhathedath Vasudevan Nair, successfully got the khadi pledge signed by more than one hundred fellow students. Satyamurthy praised the initiative of the students. The Zamorin's College thereafter became a centre of political activities of the students of Calicut.

whet the political excitement of the people. The Declaration of Independence, the strong differences that the President of the Central Legislative Assembly had with Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, and the bomb-throwing incident in the Central Legislative Assembly had very much upset the Government of India at this juncture. The patriots became more enthusiastic and active than ever. At Calicut Manjeri Rama Iyer and his followers took a leading part in a house-to-house campaign and sale of khadi which gave momentum to and intensified the movement for the boycott of foreign cloth. Unfortunately it is not possible to get at the correct statistical figures for Kerala as regards the use of khadi during this period because the sales accounts of Tamil Nad and Kerala were mixed up and not kept separately.

In the middle of September, 1930 when the salt satyagraha was in full swing the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee appointed a committee² to intensify khadi work in Kerala. Twelve permanent volunteers were appointed solely for that purpose. A second committee³ was charged with the task of spreading the message of the Indian National Congress in villages and give the masses a clear direction in regard to the future course of action. A third committee⁴ was specially constituted to issue *swadeshi* certificates to piece-goods merchants in North Malabar who were dealing only in cloth made out of Indian yarn. The work of these committees embarrassed the Government very much. Prohibitory orders were

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2. The committee consisted of Smt. M. Kartyani Amma, (Trichur) Mrs. Gracy Aaron, (Cannanore) and M. V. Ramakrishnan (Tellicherry) E. Ikkanda Warriar (Trichur) N. Krishnan Nair (Calicut) Krishnankutty Achan (Palghat) and A. C. Kannan Nair (Kanhagad).
 3. Its members were P. K. Kunhisankara Menon, M. Govinda Menon, E. K. Sankara Varma Raja, K. M. Damodaran Nair, P. M. Dewar, K. P. Chinnan Menon, P. M. Krishna Menon, V. Sankaranarayana Menon, P. Achuthan and K. V. Ahmad Koya.
 4. Its members were Samuel Aaron, M. V. Rama Krishnan, and A. K. Kunhikrishnan Nambiar.

issued to restrain the volunteers many of whom were arrested and convicted.⁵

The Salt Satyagraha of 1930 gave indeed a great fillip to the khadi movement in Malabar. Several people, under a sudden inspiration, heartily took to khadi. The demand was so great that the All-India Spinners' Association found it imperative to open several new sales depots in different parts of the country. Many persons, though not connected with the Association, took to spinning on *charuka* or *takli* in the sincere belief that by so doing they were lending a helping hand to the constructive side of the freedom struggle. In the light of the increasing popularity of khadi in Malabar it was very much unfortunate that at this time the Tamil Nad branch of the All-India Spinners' Association with which the work in Malabar was tied up remained indifferent and did not adopt a helpful attitude. Yet the gap was filled by private enterprise to some extent, particularly in Nagercoil and in North Malabar.⁶

During the movements of 1931 and 1932 there was vigorous picketing of foreign-cloth shops in all parts of Kerala. Educated women, assisted by men volunteers including lawyers and students, came out of their homes and picketed such shops in all important towns; the desperate shop-keepers hung huge curtains in front of their shops to conceal foreign stuff from the view of the volunteers.

A large number of educated persons including young ladies formed the *Khadi Pracharana Sangh* at Calicut. They distributed

5. T. Hassan Koya Mulla, President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, P. K. Kunhisankara Menon and K. V. Ahmad Koya were served with notices under Sect. 144 at Calicut restraining them from making speeches or convening meetings anywhere in Malabar. K. P. Chinnan Menon, K. M. Damodaran Nair and P. M. Krishna Menon, members of the Propaganda Committee, were arrested on 18 September while they were addressing meetings in Balusseri Village in Calicut Taluk. E. K. Sankara Varma Raja was arrested on 24 September and convicted to four months' rigorous imprisonment whereupon the people of Nadapuram and Purameri observed a spontaneous hartal. V. Sankaranarayana Menon, member, Malabar District Board, was arrested and awarded ten months' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 250.
6. The Kerala Khaddar *Mandir* of Calicut, the Popular Khaddar Store of Trivandrum, the Anthappayi Khaddar *Vastralaya* of Trichur and the Jawaharlal Khaddar Store of Nagercoil were examples of private initiative and enterprise. But unfortunately the Tamil Nad Associations' unhelpful attitude almost throttled them. In 1934 however the Association considered it wise to co-operate with at least some of them when they took over the Popular Khaddar Store of Trivandrum and the Kerala Khaddar *Mandir* of Calicut.

charkas, *taklis* and cotton free of cost among the people in different centres of the town. P. I. Kaimal served as the Secretary of the *Sangh* and Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma as the Treasurer. Smt. M. Kartayani Amma who had given up her job for national service was the most active worker of the *Sangh*.

To propagate *swadeshi* on a vast scale, *Swadeshi* Leagues were soon formed in the middle of the year 1930 at important centres in Malabar.⁷ Smt. Kameswari Amma and Smt. Krishna Bai of the Madras *Swadeshi* League carried on effective propaganda in the country. The volunteers of the *Swadeshi* League headed by Manjeri R. Subramaniam, M. Govinda Menon and Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair went on foot to the various parts of the Calicut Taluk, organising route marches through villages, singing national songs, spinning on the *takli* and addressing public meetings. All this produced a great effect on the people in the remote villages. Under the influence of the *Swadeshi* League, the important piece-goods merchants of Malabar and Cochin decided to hold a convention at Calicut in the middle of June to concert effective measures for the boycott of foreign cloth.

The ladies organised classes in khadi-spinning wherever possible. The period from 18 to 25 August, 1931 was observed as Khadi Week when there was active hawking of khadi, apart from propaganda meetings and processions. The *Bala Bharata Seva Sangh* of Calicut did active work in this connection. In September, 1931, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Congress, specially appealed to all Indians to celebrate the Gandhi week from 2 October and buy khadi; he was unhappy to note that stock worth about fifteen lakhs of rupees was lying unsold at the time at the various branches of the A.I.S.A. The *Mathrubhumi* of Calicut also made its own appeal to everyone in Malabar to popularise khadi. Yet on the whole, the Congressmen in Kerala, as K. Kelappan and C. H. Govindan Nambiar stated with sorrow in September, 1931,

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7. The *Swadeshi* League at Calicut was inaugurated on 4 June, 1930 at a meeting presided over by K. Madhavan Nair and addressed by J. P. Joshua and Rajasekharan of Madras Christian College as well as by Smt. Kameswari Amma and Smt. Krishna Bai. The visitors from Madras also went to other important places in Malabar. The students of Calicut took the *swadeshi* pledge and formed a propaganda committee; their volunteers visited houses and did propaganda. The women of Calicut led by Smt. E. Narayani Kutty Amma formed their own *Swadeshi* Committee after a meeting held on 5 June. The *Swadeshi* League at Calicut was reorganised early in 1931 when K. Madhavan Nair became its new President and Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma and Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair, its Secretaries.

were not taking as much interest in khadi development as was legitimately expected of them; as a result there was no separate branch of the A.I.S.A. for Kerala organised yet.

On 20 March, 1932 the Malabar Buy Indian League was constituted at Calicut under the presidentship of B. S. T. Mudaliar. It organised propaganda in favour of *swadeshi* goods through house-to-house visits, the taking of pledges and other means. Early in June, a branch of the League was organised at Cannanore. The Municipal Council, Tellicherry, resolved on 8 August to encourage the *swadeshi* movement in all possible ways.

Meanwhile as khadi gained wide popularity the All-India Spinners' Association found it necessary to open more sales depots in Kerala.⁸ The accounts show that the years 1930 and 1931 were peak years in regard to the sale of khadi. In 1930 alone Kerala had produced khadi worth Rs. 55,000. Khadi sold in the area was worth more than three lakhs of rupees. But the decline in the production and sales that began in 1932 was rather steep during 1933-34 and it set the Tamil Nadu Spinners' Association pondering over their failure in Kerala. This decline was attributed by the Congress leaders in Kerala to the indifference of the Tamil Nad Spinners' Association. Their complaints reached the ears of Gandhiji and other leaders. Finally the All India Spinners' Association decided to give Kerala a separate branch, independent of the Tamil Nad Spinners' Association. The new Kerala branch of the Association maintained two khadi producing centres at Payyannur and Nagercoil and four sales depots at Calicut, Palghat, Ernakulam and Trivandrum. Besides, there were two certified shops at Trichur and an agency at Cannanore.

It may be noted in this connection that the Swadeshi Exhibitions conducted in Malabar during this period infused into the people a new national consciousness.

The first *Swadeshi* Art and Industrial Exhibition was held at the premises of Annie Hall, the residence of the veteran leader, Manjeri Rama Iyer, in Calicut during the last week of August, 1930. Though a large contingent of the Armed Reserve Police had stationed themselves at the gate of the Exhibition, people in hundreds flocked in the premises from the beginning. The first of its kind in Kerala, the Exhibition gave a great impetus to the *swadeshi* movement and a new life to indigenous arts and crafts.

8. Such depots were established at Alleppey, Cannanore and Quilon in 1932 and at Trichur in 1933. By the end of 1934 there were two centres of khadi production and eight khadi sales depots in Kerala under the management of the spinners' Association.

Public meetings also were held in connection with the Exhibition and they were of high educative value to the people." The second Exhibition organised on a large scale and held in the premises of the Ganpat High School, Calicut, was inaugurated by V. Ramdas Pandalu in November, 1931. Apart from the Swadeshi Exhibition at Cannanore held during September, 1932 the third All India Khadi and Swadeshi Exhibition¹⁰ also was held at Calicut in the middle of December, 1932. It included various sections like khadi, sericulture, bee-keeping, arts, education etc. There was a complaint, however, that at the Exhibition at Calicut organised under the United India Club in December, 1934, there was very little of *swadeshi* atmosphere even though some prominent members of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee had been on the Exhibition Committee; village industries in different parts of India were not satisfactorily represented so as to arouse popular interests; it was also incomprehensible how some merchants who were dealers in foreign stuff were enabled to have stalls at a so-called *Swadeshi* Exhibition. Its organisation provoked a lot of controversy for some time. Again when Rajendra Prasad, President of the Congress, opened the fourth All India Khadi and Swadeshi Exhibition at Calicut in December, 1935 a complaint was heard, of the hostile attitude and activities of a member of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, but the Exhibition on the whole was a splendid one. During the same month when Kerala celebrated the golden

9. The Exhibition was held on the initiative of K. Vasudevan Nair, Manjeri Subramaniam, M. Govinda Menon, Smt. E. Narayanikutty Amma and Smt. K. E. Sarada who were sponsors of the Calicut *Swadeshi* League. *Mahakavi* Vallathol Narayana Menon inaugurated it at 9 a. m. on 24 August by hoisting the tri-colour flag when the flag-song, composed by himself was being sung in chorus by the men and women volunteers. There were many attractive items in the programme like variety entertainments, competitions and lectures, which were interesting and instructive. The Exhibition was the fore-runner of the great All-India Khadi and Swadeshi Exhibitions of Calicut, held annually from 1930 till 1940 as well as similar Exhibitions organised at Trichur. The Women's Indian Association and *Mahila Sangh* of Calicut co-operated with the Exhibition Committee. The Exhibition was a big show-window of several indigenous arts and industries. Public meetings were held in the premises of the Ganpat High School, Calicut. Its Manager and Head-Master G. Ganpat Rao and his son, G. Sarvatham Rao, had the courage and patriotism to give the school premises for the use of the Exhibition Committee which, in the eyes of the Government, was a disloyal and dangerous organisation.
10. It was opened by Mrs. Ammu Swaminathan and inaugurated by *Mahakavi* Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer.

jubilee of the Congress there was a varied programme of activity including khadi work, among other items.

In spite of the progress of khadi achieved so far, the impression that Rajendra Prasad gathered on his visit to **Malabar** in December, 1935 was that khadi was not so popular among the people of Kerala as among those of Tamil Nad or Andhra Pradesh. *Charkas* lay idle in large numbers as there was no incentive for the workers. But since 1937 there was a great impetus to the production and sale of khadi in Malabar on account of the encouragement given by the first Congress Ministry of the Madras Presidency. The increased demand for khadi led to a rise in price. Several sales agencies had to be opened in rural parts to cope with the demand. One of the certified khadi shops of Trichur was taken over by the Kerala branch of the All-India Spinners' Association in 1937. During the same year a khadi producing centre was started at Pulikkal in Ernad Taluk. It was admittedly a great boon to a large number of Muslim women and girls. Under this centre four subsidiary branches functioned, namely, those at Nediyrippu, Pandikkad, Randathani and Tirurangadi where the members of the Moplah community constituted a majority. Nearly one thousand women got the necessary training in spinning.

The following table shows the progress of the production of khadi in Kerala¹¹ during the three years, 1935-37.

	1935	1936	1937
Total Value of Khadi produced	Rs. 23,751	Rs. 25,664	Rs. 48,377
Weight in lbs	21,789	18,258	29,845
Square yards	71,841	69,712	1,15,820

In the first eight months of 1938 khadi valued at Rs. 69,386 (45171 lbs. and 165448 square yards) was produced; by the end of the year khadi worth Rs. 1,11,904 was produced and that worth Rs. 1,13,230 was sold. Thus there was an increase of 127.8 per cent in production and 55 per cent rise in sales. The Kerala branch of the Spinners' Association served 175 villages and provided work for 5268 spinners, 339 weavers and 56 others. The amount given as wages totalled Rs. 100622.¹²

11. Official report of the All-India Spinners' Association.

12. Report by Sankar Lal Banker, General Secretary, All-India Spinners Association, 1938.

Payyannur was deservedly the headquarters of the Kerala branch of the Spinners' Association. A khadi workshop also was opened there in 1938 to manufacture the implements necessary for the production of khadi.

The cloth manufactured by the Kerala branch was of very fine quality because most of the workers were hereditary weavers. The special attention to quality paid by them drew forth the comment from Sankar Lal Banker that ".....people of Kerala prefer Kerala khadi to the khadi brought to the Province from outside. The success is due entirely to the sincerity and devotional service of the workers in Kerala."

(2) Youth Movement

The youth of Kerala did not lag behind. Ever since the Madras session of the Indian National Congress in 1927 and the All India Youth Conference held at Madras during the Congress session, there had been a great political awakening among the young men and women. The work of Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair, then a member of the Executive Committee of the All India Youth Conference and others like E. C. Kunhikannan Nambiar, a young Congressman, gave a great fillip to the Youth Movement in Malabar since 1928. The tour of T. I. Vaswani, President of the All-India Youth Congress in Malabar during 1928 was indeed fruitful so far as it resulted in the formation of Youth Movement in the District

On 17 March, 1929, Manjeri Rama Iyer inaugurated the *Shakti Ashram* at Payyoli in North Malabar to impart training to the youth for national service. As an adjunct to it a *Yuva Jana Sangham* was started at Tikkoti (also in North Malabar) on the same lines as Vaswani's Youth Congress. E. C. Kunhikannan Nambiar was the soul of these organisations. A monthly journal, *Shakti*, in Malayalam was published by the *Shakti Karyalaya* at Kanhangad in North Malabar as the official organ of the Bharat Youth Movement. The Youth League organised under Dr. K. P. Thayyil accelerated constructive work in Cochin. The activities of the youth organisations infused into the minds of the young men and women a new spirit of service and sacrifice for the cause of the country and prepared them for the great struggle that was in the offing.

13. During 1938 the workshop made and distributed 1832 charkas, 3686 bows, 1815 wheels for the quickening process, 208 pins, 1865 banking machines and several other useful articles among the spinners.

At a conference of the youths of Malabar held at Annie Hall, Calicut, on 9 November 1929, the *Kerala Yuvak Sangh*¹⁴ was organised with Manjeri Rama Iyer as President, K. Kelappan as Vice-President and E. C. Kunhikannan Nambiar as Secretary. It was resolved to carry on active propaganda for khadi, prohibition and social service and to open centres at different places in Malabar for the revival of the traditional *kalari* system of physical exercises and feats. In fact such a training was being given in the *Shakti Ashram* at Payyoli and other centres in North Malabar. It was thus that the *kalari* system was revived at different centres in Malabar.

By August, 1931 the *Bala Bharata Seva Sangham* came to be organised at Calicut and in several other places in Malabar. Its members who were children under fourteen hailing from respectable families actively co-operated with the elders in arousing national consciousness and participated in the movements of 1931 and 1932.

(3) Labour Organisation

Even at the time of the Provincial Conference at Palghat in 1923 a resolution had been passed demanding the association of the independence movement with an active effort for the welfare of organised Labour. From 1928 onwards organised Labour also entered the field as a new force to be reckoned with. Previously leaders like P. Ramunni Menon and M. M. Govinda Kurup used to extend help to Labour whenever it was in trouble with the managements. The South Indian Railway Strike of 1928 convinced the leaders of the necessity to organise Labour Unions in Malabar. Many labourers in Olavakkot, Shoranur, Calicut, Cannanore and other places in Malabar had joined the Railway Strike of 1928 that revealed the collective strength of proper organisation.

It was the period when there was serious unrest among labourers at different centres in North India. The Government looked upon the new developments in Labour movement with fear and consternation and began to take drastic steps to counteract their influence. Many Labour leaders were arrested in March 1929 in Bombay, Bengal, the Punjab and the United Provinces. Some of them were communists, some "were near communists, yet others were just made trade unionists."¹⁵ Commenting on the general situation Gandhiji observed:¹⁶

The arrests of Labour leaders or so called communists show that Government is in a panicky state and is betraying the

14. This organisation was declared to be unlawful through a notification in the Fort St. George Gazette dated 1 February, 1932.

15. Nehru, *Autobiography*, Page 188.

16. Quoted in Tendulkar, Vol. II, page 468.

symptoms to which we have been used and which presage a period of terrorism. Evidently it believes in a periodical exhibition of its capacity to supersede all law and to discover to a trembling India the red claws which usually remain under cover. Of course the farce of a trial will be enacted. If the accused are wise they will not run into the trap and assist the farce by being represented by counsel. But they will boldly risk imprisonment. Presently it will be the turn of thousands not merely to risk but to face and court imprisonment, if this reign of lawlessness under the guise of law is to be ended once for all.

A meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was held on 5 April, 1929 at which resolutions were passed condemning the repressive policy launched by the Government as well as the reactionary measures like the Public Safety Bill, the Industrial Disputes Bill, etc. It was also resolved to give a fitting reply to the Government by organising Labour movement under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and by promoting the welfare of the workers. Everybody agreed to do concerted work for the boycott of foreign cloth and the encouragement of *swadeshi*, enrol members in the Congress in large numbers and organise Congress committees in all places in Kerala. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer was elected as the Organising Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee. Subsequently on 23 April a largely attended public meeting was held at Calicut to protest against the Public Safety Ordinance.¹⁷

After the Civil Disobedience Movement was called off in March, 1931 Labour troubles shot forth here and there in Malabar. During the same month nearly 800 workers in the Malabar Spinning and Weaving Company, an old industrial institution in Calicut, went on strike on account of a cut in wages. There was a similar strike in the weaving company of the Commonwealth Trust at Calicut as well. At a meeting of the labourers of these companies, presided over by U. Gopala Menon, a Union of the labourers of the weaving factories was formed. Evidently the general discontent was entering upon a new sphere, in wider extension. The Congress extended all help to the strikers. R. Suryanaraya Rao of the Servants of India Society did much to organise Labour at this time.

Towards the end of December, 1934 the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee appointed a committee consisting of P. Krishna Pillai, K. P. Gopalan and Chandroth Kunhiraman Nair to organise labour. On 17 January, 1935 the Working Committee

17. The meeting was addressed by B. Siva Rao and G. Sarvotham Rao, then M.L.A. (Central).

of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee protested against the policy, adopted by the factory managements in Calicut and Ferok, of reducing half-a-day's wage by compelling the workmen to complete 54 hours of work in 5½ days' time and called upon them to fix the number of working hours at nine per day. There was a huge Labour rally at Calicut on 19 January under the leadership of K. Kelappan and a week later, K. P. Gopalan went on hunger strike for ten days at Ferok. The labourers in tile factories, timber yards and saw mills began to organise themselves under the Congress Labour Committee. Labour conferences were held at Cannanore, Tellicherry and other places. The Labour strike in the Malabar Spinning and Weaving Company, Ltd., at Tiruvannur, Calicut in February, 1935 was amicably settled on the intervention of Kelappan though in March fresh short-lived troubles arose in the Malabar Tile Works, Ferok; Pinarayi Tile Works, Pinarayi; Ferok Tile Works, Ferok; and Aaron Mills, Pappinisseri. Prohibitory order was extended to all these places. The Kerala Provincial Labour Conference was held at Calicut on 26 May, 1935 under the presidentship of Srimathi Mani Ben Kara. Towards the end of December, 1935 there was again trouble in the Tiruvannur Mill, the labourers of which presented a petition to the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee for the redress of their grievances; and the latter rendered all possible help to them.

On 28 April, 1936 the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and resolved to have a Labour Committee with Jairamdas Daulatram, Sankarlal Bankar, M. R. Masani, V. V. Giri and Acharya Kripalani as members. But Labour was more and more moving into the grip of the Congress Socialist Party. In 1937 Labour Unions came to be organised by the socialists on a large scale in many factories in Malabar.

The Travancore Labour Conference at Alleppey held on 23 May, 1937 was presided over by V. V. Giri who reminded Labour that right and responsibility are inseparable from each other; in factory there should be discipline, honest work and co-operation with the employers in building up the industry, with no room for communal thought. At the Kottayam Taluk Ryots' Conference held at Tellicherry, again in May, 1937 Kelappan stated that no foreign Government could contribute to the prosperity of the peasant and the worker in India.

There was evident sign of discontent and unrest, a tendency to clamour for rights and privileges. Discipline was at a low ebb and strikes came to be organised even for petty reasons. Anyway as a result of the constructive efforts of the Indian National Congress, Labour, properly organised and strengthened, was able to realise its

identity and appreciate the value of collective bargaining as was shown by the Great Textile Workers' Union of Ahmedabad.

(4) Prohibition

There was severe reaction in North India that violently expressed itself against the repressive measures progressively adopted by the Government. The shooting of European officers and the throwing of bombs on one side had their counterparts in conspiracy cases, arrests and prosecutions on the other. The Lahore Conspiracy Case involving Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt attracted considerable attention in the entire country. The under-trial prisoners offered hunger strike and no event for many years in the past had touched the heart of India as much as their tragedy.

In spite of the expressions of violence in different parts of India, constructive work in Kerala continued at a steady pace. In 1929 some efforts were made in Malabar to introduce Prohibition. The North Malabar Prohibition League thus came into existence to do the necessary propaganda. Later in 1930 when the Salt Satyagraha was started, propaganda in favour of Prohibition was actively conducted. Appeals were made to the toddy-tappers and owners of trees not to indulge in the manufacture or sale of liquor. The Prohibition Movement was quite encouraging in Palghat District. The Satyagraha Committee devoted special attention to constructive work including Prohibition and rural uplift. The *Kerala Yuvak Sangh* conducted a vigorous campaign in North Malabar to achieve total Prohibition.

At Quilon in Travancore a new organisation called the *Swadeshi* and Temperance League was formed to popularise *swadeshi* and support Prohibition.

To complete the successful auctioning of the contracts for liquor shops the Government passed an order on 21 July, 1930 under section 144 Cr. P.C. in Malabar prohibiting the satyagrahi volunteers from obstructing the auctions in the first two weeks of August. The Satyagrahis were harassed but the Prohibition Movement was so successful that the Government sustained much loss of excise revenue.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March, 1931 permitted the peaceful picketing of foreign-cloth shops and liquor shops. So when the leaders and the volunteers were released from jail, the picketing was resumed with renewed vigour. This state of affairs continued till the next Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932. The evil of drink was considerably reduced, especially among the poorer classes, in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. Volunteer corps came to be organised in towns and villages in Malabar. The volunteers were

subjected to indignity by the shop vendors and other reactionary elements with the connivance of the police. Clearly the subordinate officials were not in a mood to carry out the spirit of the terms of the Delhi Pact. During the nationalist movement of 1932 the number of the arrested volunteers became too large for accommodation in jails and the police began to cane rather than arrest them. The Civil Disobedience Movement was discontinued in 1933.

In general review it may be stated that the Prohibition Movement was most vigorous and effective during 1932. It had its distant echo in the Prohibition Bill passed in Madras Legislative Assembly in September 1937 when the Congress Ministry under C. Rajagopalachari chose Salem District as the first field of experiment in Prohibition.

(5) D.M.R.T.

Ever since 1921 vigorous and sustained social work was being carried on by the Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust in many parts of the District. The Trust was primarily organised by the Servants of India Society to rehabilitate the victims of the unfortunate rebellion of that year. M. S. Madhava Rao was the first Secretary of the Trust. He was succeeded by R. Suryanarayana Rao, well-known for his ability and devotion and social service. V. R. Nayanar ^{17a} assumed the Secretaryship in 1929. It was under his perennial inspiration that the Trust established several elementary schools, child welfare Centres and centres of cottage industry in Malabar. Besides *Grama Kshema Sabhas* also came to be organised by the Trust to promote rural welfare. Literacy campaign was vigorously taken up, night schools and Poor Homes were established. Nayanar brought relief to those who suffered from the grim effects of floods and cholera. His earnestness, sincerity and selfless service compelled the Government officials to extend to him all cooperation in his activities. The pioneering and selfless work carried on by M. S. Madhava Rao, R. Suryanarayana Rao and particularly by V R Nayanr went a long way, in ameliorating the pitiable condition of the helpless people in the different centres where the Trust operated.

17a. He was the son of A. Ryrn Nambiar, Tahsildar, and belonged to Varikkara Vetakke Veetil House at Kunhimangalam. After graduation he worked, for some time, as the Branch Secretary of the Swarajya Party at Tellicherry. He was also the Editor of the *West Coast Spectator* and later joined the Servants of India Society. He helped considerably to build up the co-operative movement in Malabar and organised several Associations or Societies including the Ferok Labour Union. He served no party but humanity and literally wore himself out in silent service.

(6) *The Spread of Hindi**

The nationalist leaders were keen on having a common language for India that would take the place of English ultimately. As Hindi was spoken and understood by a very large number of people in India, it was decided to adopt it as the *lingua franca* and spread it throughout the country, especially the South. Persons like V. Krishnaswamy Iyer of Madras realised the importance of Hindi early enough but Hindi *prachar* in an organised form was started in Madras only in 1918. The small number of teachers of Hindi from North India, charged with the mission of popularising that language in the South, used in the early days to confine their attention to Andhra and Tamil Nad regions where they worked at different centres. On account of a dearth of such teachers in Kerala the propagation of Hindi as a national language in the State started only in 1922. During that year M. K. Damodaran Unni¹⁸ was commissioned by the authorities of the *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan* at Prayag to organise the teaching of Hindi in Kerala. Harihar Sarma, the *Sanchalak* (Manager) of the *Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha* sent him to Manjapra in South Malabar, which may be considered as the first *Hindi Prachar* centre in Kerala. Damodaran Unni next shifted his headquarters to Trichur where, with the co-operation of Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, he worked successfully for two years. He worked at various other centres as well, including Ettumanur, Kumarakam, Vaikom, Kumaranallur, Kudamalur, Changanacherry, Mavelikkara, Haripad and Trivandrum and trained a number of students.

The second man who worked to popularise Hindi in the early days was K. Kesavan Nair¹⁹ a product of the *Hindi Pracharak School*, opened at Erode in 1922. He served the cause of Hindi

* The book in Hindi written by P. K. Kesavan Nair on the "History of Hindi Movement in South India" has been very much helpful in preparing this account.

18. He had studied Sanskrit at the Sanskrit College, Pattambi and subsequently Hindi. He came into contact with the *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan* and at the irresistible behest of Purushothamdas Tandon returned to Kerala to start work under the *Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha*. He was a reputed linguist. Later he entered service under the Government of Travancore. He passed away in 1953 at the age of 53, a pioneer in his field of activity. N. Venkatesvaran, C. K. Gopalakrishnan, S. N. Raghavan Nair, P. Sivarama Pillai, and K. Bhaskaran Nair were those among his students who devoted themselves to the cause of Hindi in the Southern region.

19. Later he entered service under the Government of Cochin as a teacher at Trichur.

under the *Sabha* at the centres of Trivandrum, Trichur and Ottapalam and effectively diffused the knowledge of that language. The spread of Hindi in those days owed much also to Sankaranandaji²⁰ of Neyyattinkarai who, after his studies in North India, started teaching the language in Kerala in 1923. He did laudable work at the centres of Trivandrum, Neyyattinkarai, Kunnamkulam and Trichur. Besides, P. K. Narayanan Nair, P. K. Kesavan Nair²¹ and K. Velayudhan Nair²² who had undergone training in the Central Hindi *Pracharak* School at Madras devoted their full-time attention to the cause of Hindi in Kerala.

During the period, 1922-27, the foundations were laid for the growing popularity of Hindi. The enthusiastic people responded favourably but unfortunately the number of efficient and trained teachers was so small that they could not cope with the increasing demand or cause the extensive diffusion of Hindi. The *pracharaks* had often to cater to the needs of the neighbouring areas also and in spite of financial difficulties and the lack of satisfactory transport arrangements, the patriotic workers did their best to spread the knowledge of Hindi, walking on foot for miles and enduring several hardships. Those who had just passed the *Prathmik* or *Madhyama* examinations and untrained teachers were pressed into service to teach the growing number of students. As a result, the teaching became ineffective to some extent and the standard of proficiency went down.

In 1928 a motion was introduced in the Cochin Legislative Council to the effect that Hindi should be adopted as a compulsory subject in all schools. Though it was passed with a majority the Government was willing then to accept Hindi only as an optional subject.

During the next quinquennium, 1927-32, the Hindi movement in Kerala registered remarkable progress, beyond expectations warranted by previous experience. Several Hindi schools were opened and every effort was made to accord Hindi a well-deserved place in educational institutions. Trained teachers also were available in adequate numbers. The tour, undertaken by some of the

20. After working under the *Sabha* for some time, he entered service under the Government of Travancore. On retirement he re-entered the *Sabha* and worked as Hindi *pracharak* until his death.

21. He had started work in 1925 and taught Hindi at Nattasseri, Kottayam, Chittur, Calicut, Palghat, Tellicherry and Cannanore. Later he joined service under the University of Travancore.

22. He worked at Trichur, Vaikom and other places and later, joined the S. B. College, Changanacherry, as Lecturer in Hindi. He expired in 1962.

great nationalist leaders in Kerala as part of their South Indian tour to collect funds for the propagation of Hindi, gave not a little impetus to the Hindi movement. When Lala Lajpat Rai visited Ernakulam to preside over the States Peoples' Conference in Cochin in May, 1928 a huge Hindi *Sammelan* was held at the Maharaja's College over which he presided. C. Rajagopalachari and Seth Jammalal Bajaj visited Kanyakumari, Trivandrum, Ernakulam, Cochin, Calicut and other places in Kerala and addressed gatherings. On 10 February, 1929 C. Rajagopalachari attending the first All-Kerala Hindi *Prachar Sammelan* at Ernakulam,²³ congratulated the Government of Cochin for having accorded Hindi a place in school curriculum and set a noble example to South India in general." He also inaugurated a Hindi Reading Room and Library at Ernakulam. The next day the leaders went to Calicut²⁴ where Seth Jammalal Bajaj inaugurated and also took a model Hindi class. They then visited the *Sabari Ashram* at Olavakkot when the local people presented them with a purse. Later in May, 1929 Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya visited Kerala and addressed public gatherings at Ernakulam and Cochin on the importance of Hindi. He was highly appreciative of the progress achieved in Kerala in respect of Hindi and praised the women in particular for the keen interest evinced by them in assimilating that language. As a result of the exhortation of these leaders there was a spurt of activity in the organisation of Hindi classes at various centres.

During the period, 1927-32, there was brisk work at various centres in Kerala. In 1928 W. P. Ignatius became the *prachar* minister under the *Sabha* and organised the Hindi movement with great ability. He also edited the English section of the Hindi Journal, *Hindi Pracharak*. He received the active co-operation of Dr. C. Mathai, then Director of Public Instruction, Cochin State, as well as of several enlightened ladies and Heads of educational

23. It was held in the Maharaja's College compound under the presidency of Seshu Iyer, M. R. A. S. It was attended by the Dewan of Cochin, T. S. Narayana Iyer, and the Director of Public Instruction, Dr. C. Mathai, besides a large number of prominent officials and non-officials including nearly 200 women. Smt. Lakshmikutty Netyaramma, the consort of the Ruler of Cochin, was the President of the Reception Committee. Seth Jammalal Bajaj inaugurated the conference. One of the resolutions passed demanded the adoption of Hindi as a compulsory subject in school curriculum.

24. At Calicut the two leaders were received by Seth Nagjee Amersee, Shyamji Sunderdas, T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, U. Gopala Menon and others. Seth Nagjee promised to meet the expenses of a Hindi teacher. At all the places visited by the leaders purses were presented to them.

institutions. P. K. Kesavan Nair developed a model Hindi centre at Chittur where he handled as many as 250 students single-handed. His work there was so effective that Hindi became the second spoken language among some of the local families, as reported by Ignatius. P. K. Narayanan Nair worked at the Ernakulam centre. The requirements of Vadakkancherry and suburbs were met by K. Vasudevan Pillai. Govardhandas Sastri did a lot of work at Cranganore and Calicut during 1928-29. At Thiruvilwamalai at least one member in a family was conversant with Hindi as a result of the ceaseless efforts of Madhava Kaimal.

Until 1929-30 Hindi propaganda had not been undertaken in a satisfactory manner in Malabar as in Cochin or Travancore. There were only a few effective centres in Palghat, Olavakkot, Calicut and Cannanore on account of the paucity of qualified teachers. When the Civil Disobedience Movement gathered momentum in 1930 Gandhiji included Hindi *prachar* as part of the constructive work of the Congress. Thereafter the *Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha* found it easy to organise special Hindi Classes even in remote villages. The roots of Hindi went deep into the soil in Ottapalam, Badagara and Tellicherry and adjoining villages. In Palghat the work was actively undertaken by P. K. Kesavan Nair, C. G. Gopalakrishnan and A. Vasu Menon²⁵ who got very active co-operation from Dr. Karamchand, then serving at the local Government Victoria College as Principal. At Akathetara near Olavakkot intensive work went on under the guidance of T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer. Vasu Achan turned out excellent work at Alathur. N. Sundara Iyer, V. Narayana Menon, C. R. Nanappa and others concentrated their efforts in Ottapalam and its suburbs. At Calicut the work had been initiated by Govardhandas Sastri and later carried on by some of the *pracharaks* earlier mentioned, with the co-operation of a band of spirited workers including Lakshman Vidyarthi, Buddha Singh and Smt. Suganthi Bai. The Arya Samaj at Calicut evidently took keen interest in the spread of Hindi. Sarvotham Rao, Manager of the Ganpat High School, was a great patron of Hindi and arranged for the teaching of that language as an optional subject in his institution. B. S. T. Mudaliar and the Gujarati residents of Calicut including Shyamji Sunderdas and Seth Nagjee Amersee gave liberal donations to help the Hindi movement. The *Mathrubhumi*, with its patriotic band of editors, contributed in no small measure to its success, through systematic appeals and propaganda. The chief propagandist in Badagara was N. Venkateswaran who

25. On account of his unique devotion and selfless service he came to be recognised by the Hindi *Prachar* Sabha as the most successful Hindi worker.

began his work in 1931 and got the active co-operation of E. K. Sankara Varma Raja, Paroli Vasudevan Nambuthiri and Chathu Master. At Cannanore, regular Hindi classes began from 1931 on the initiative of C. N. Govindan. At Tellicherry, P. K. Kesavan Nair, the *pracharak*, started regular classes in 1931 and subsequently his work was continued by P. V. Narayanan Nair and C. R. Rama Kurup. A larger number of students learnt Hindi in this town than at any other centre. Dr. T. V. Narayanan Nair, Swami Ananda Tirth, Sankara Iyer, M. Achuthan Vaidyar and L. S. Prabhu extended all support to the movement at Tellicherry.

It was often an interesting sight in Malabar in those days to see the children sitting along with the elderly people in the same class and picking up the rudiments of Hindi in the *prathamik* section. The political prisoners also had their own Hindi classes in jails which stood them in good stead after the period of their incarceration. In all places the women out-numbered men in the Hindi classes. The All-Kerala Hindi *prachar* Conference under the president-ship of K. F. Nariman held at Badagara at the time of the Political conference in 1931 was very much indicative of a new wave of enthusiasm that had gripped the people at the time. On the whole, the number of boys, girls, men and women who took the examinations conducted by the Hindi Prachar Sabha at the *prathamik*, *madhyama* and *visarad* levels in response to Gandhiji's call ran into thousands.

Hindi took greater strides in Cochin after 1930. I. Velayudhan and Vimalji were two prominent teachers who worked under the Sabha, apart from several others, while Dr. A. K. Menon, Dr. C. Mathai and Dr. Krishna Iyer were the chief promoters. As regards Travancore, K. Vasudevan Pillai²⁶ was able to make Trivandrum one of the flourishing centres of Hindi learning in South India. At the meeting held in the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall, Trivandrum, on 26 May, 1931, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his sense of satisfaction about the progress of Hindi in Travancore. The *Hindi Premi Mandal* of the city rendered laudable service in the popularisation of Hindi among the people. In December, 1932 the Travancore Hindi *pracharak* Conference was held in Neyyattinkarai under the presidentship of Lallubhai Samaldas. This conference gave a fillip to the Hindi movement in the locality, organised by Smt. Lakshmi Kutty, the first lady to enter the field of *pracharaks* in Kerala. On 9 August 1931 the Legislative Council

26. He was one of the earlier dedicated workers in the field. He worked under the *Hindi Prachar Sabha* until 1948 when he resigned his office and established the *Kerala Hindi Prachar Sabha* at Trivandrum.

in Travancore passed a resolution²⁷ to the effect that Hindi should be made a compulsory subject in all Government Schools.

With a view to the extensive propagation of Hindi, G. Ramachandran founded in 1931 the Travancore State Hindi Council of which several prominent citizens were members. A few *pracharaks* were entrusted with the task of conducting classes in Hindi under the auspices of this Council.

In June, 1932 the Travancore branch of the *Dakshin Bharat* Hindi Prachar Sabha was inaugurated. On 3 July another branch of the *Prachar Sabha* was opened at Ernakulam, intended to cover the regions of Cochin, Malabar and South Canara. There were about 24 Hindi *pracharaks* in Travancore at this time. In October, 1933 the Travancore *Hindi Prachar Sabha* and the Cochin *Hindi Prachar Sabha* were merged with each other. Thus was born the Kerala Provincial Hindi Prachar Sabha.

The period, 1931-36 was as important in the spread of Hindi in Kerala as the quinquennium, 1927-32. Devadoot Vidyarthi,²⁸ Secretary of the newly-formed Kerala Provincial *Hindi Prachar Sabha* and A. Chandrahassan²⁹ who had been the Secretary of the Cochin State Branch of the *Sabha* successfully brought to bear all their enthusiasm and organisational ability on the movement which grew from strength to strength under their guidance while in Travancore area, in particular, K. Vasudevan Pillai continued to be the main spring of activity. The Hindi movement produced a new sense of national unity and paved the way for a new cultural effusion.

In 1935 Rajendra Prasad, then President of the Indian National Congress, visited Kerala and presided over the *Hindi Prachar* Conference held on 5 December under the auspices of the All-India

27. It was moved by A. S. Damodaran Asan and supported by Pattom A. Thanu Pillai. The Director of Public Instruction opposed it. Twenty four members voted in favour of it and sixteen against it.

28. He was the main actor on the stage during the period 1932-41. Having worked in Tamilnad and Kanara areas during 1922-32, he came to Kerala in 1932 to work at Trivandrum. He put the movement on a firm footing. He was a teacher, *par excellence*.

29. He was appointed in 1931 as Hindi *pracharak* at Ernakulam and his quiet efficiency expressed itself in the success of the Hindi movement not only in Kerala but in South India. He was the first graduate to enter the field of Hindi *prachar* under the *Sabha* at a time when few graduates ventured into it.

Khadi and Swadeshi Exhibition Committee, Calicut.³⁰ He noted with deep pleasure that Hindi had "gained great strides in Kerala."³¹ After the formation of the Congress Ministry in Madras by C. Rajagopalachari in 1937 a great incentive came to be given to the study of Hindi in schools and colleges.

(7) *Untouchability*

Untouchability and unapproachability were looked upon as great social evils by men of progressive outlook in Kerala even before the days of the Home Rule Movement. Leaders like Manjeri Rama Iyer, a great theosophist and Dr. Ayyathan Gopalan were preaching against these evils in Malabar. Manjeri Rama Iyer was the first to venture into the uncharted sea of Satyagraha in Kerala as early as 1917. The roads surrounding the historic Tali Temple of Calicut could not, in those days, be used by the class of "untouchables." The roads belonged to the Devaswom, the Trustee of which was the Zamorin of Calicut. C. Krishnan raised his voice of protest against the exclusion of "untouchables." Manjeri Rama Iyer decided to violate the custom by taking with him some prominent leaders of the Tiyya community in Calicut along the temple roads. Scenting trouble the authorities closed the roads by putting up fences. Undaunted by this, Rama Iyer took with him Dr. K. V. Choyi, a Tiyya leader, removed a portion of the fencing and walked on the road between the temple and the temple tank. This event caused great sensation throughout Malabar. It was however only after a year or two that the roads were thrown open to all castes and communities.

In 1924 Gandhiji arrived in Palghat by car from Trichur and accepted the hospitality of L. A. Subbarama Iyer, a prominent nationalist leader. He stayed at his host's residence, *Rabindra Vilas*, named after the great poet, Rabindranath Tagore, who too has earlier stayed therein as a guest and entered into a scholarly discussion on untouchability with the Brahmin pandits, who in the light of Vedic injunctions, tried to convince him that it was sanctioned by religion.³² Though impressed by their deep knowledge of Sanskrit, Gandhiji struck home the point that evil customs persisted in society on account of the misinterpretation of sacred texts and that in the

30. He witnessed and enjoyed on that day a Hindi drama, *Mewad Pathan*, enacted by the Hindi enthusiasts of Calicut.

31. The *Mathrubhumi* dated 11 December, 1935.

32. Venkatapathi Sastri was a prominent scholar who supported the orthodox view-point and it may be of interest to record that after a few years he himself became a supporter of temple entry for the low castes and tried to convert other Brahmins to his changed view-point.

eyes of God all men are equal. Gandhiji then expressed a desire to meet the Nayadis of the locality who were soon brought to his presence by T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer. He kept some of the unfortunate members of the socially depressed community close to him for some time and instructed his host to give them rice and proper clothing. This incident, happening at a highly orthodox centre, looked much revolutionary in those days as the Nayadis should not have approached anywhere near the Brahmin *agraharas*.

Ever since the Vaikom Satyagraha the nationalists in Malabar devoted their time for propaganda against untouchability in particular. The leaders with progressive outlook organised on 3 and 4 May 1929, the *All-Kerala Hindu Maha Sammelan*, a big assembly of Hindus at the historically famous site of Tirunavaya, on the banks of the Bharata river in South Malabar. A large number of men and women delegates attended the conference³³ which was presided over by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and addressed by Dr. B. S. Moonje, the Hindu *Maha Sabha* leader. Pandit Malaviya's lengthy exhortation stirred the hearts of the delegates and visitors. Resolutions were passed favouring temple entry, the stoppage of animal sacrifice and the abolition of untouchability.

The Hindu Women's Conference held in the same *pandal* also passed similar resolutions, apart from the one calling on the people of Kerala to boycott foreign cloth and encourage khadi and *swadeshi*.

Under the auspices of the Anti-Untouchability Committee with K. Kelapan as its President, the eighth day of October 1929 was observed throughout Malabar as Anti-Untouchability Day, with a varied programme including processions, public meetings, *Daridra Narayana Puja* etc. Members of all castes within the Hindu fold sat together and participated in a sumptuous feast at Calicut. The anti-untouchability movement was not without opposition,³⁴ but as

33. On the night of 2 May there was a fierce gale and the huge *pandal* put upon the sands collapsed causing the death of a volunteer. In spite of the tragedy and the inclement weather, the conference struck to its programme.

34. Some of the orthodox members of the Hindu Community looked with disfavour upon the movement. In many places including Pappinisseri, Perambra and Quilandy in North Malabar and Perinthalmanna and Pattambi in South Malabar there were cases of assault on low-caste people for alleged pollution, by them, of caste Hindus. In spite of complaints from the aggrieved parties and national workers the police adopted an indifferent attitude. Thereupon Kelappan, President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, started a vigorous agitation and spared no effort to bring such cases directly before the District authorities.

a result of active propaganda, on the lines laid down by Gandhiji, a change of heart was soon noticeable here and there. On 1 January, 1930, the Executive Committee of the Sreekanthaswaram Temple at Calicut resolved to permit the entry of members of the scheduled castes into the premises of the temple. To celebrate this event, the caste Hindu leaders took out a huge procession on *Sivaraathri* day and worshipped at the temple.

Kelappan, President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, went to Bombay and presented a memorandum to Gandhiji and the Working Committee on 9 July, 1931 regarding the developments in Malabar after the Gandhi-Irvin Pact, with special reference to the eradication of untouchability and temple entry. He pointed out that there was a feeling among the low castes, particularly the Ezhavas, that the Congress had not devoted its attention to anti-untouchability work as much as khadi work or Prohibition.

The *savarna* attitude to the low castes continued to be reactionary and hostile in Malabar. On 30 August, 1931 a procession of *Adi-Dravidas* in Chirakal Taluk that had started from the Kannadi Paramba Labour School was obstructed by an orthodox crowd and its participants were severely beaten, in the presence of the police who were silent spectators of the incident. On 4 October, another similar procession led by A. K. Gopalan Nambiar and K. Kunhappa Nambiar on the public road at Kandoth near Payyannur was attacked by a crowd of Tiyyas with sticks and knives.³⁵ These two incidents were indicative of the grip of tradition from which the people had not yet escaped.

At the meeting of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee at Guruvayur on 5 September, 1931 it was resolved to form a committee consisting of Smt. P. M. Kamalavathi, Smt. M. Kartyayani Amma and K. Kelappan who would visit the members of the depressed classes in their huts and rouse in them a spirit of social freedom.

As a result of intensive propaganda and the special effort of Rev. John Verghese of St. Thomas Mission who constantly worked for their education and uplift, the Nayadis of Kuzhalmannam in Palghat Taluk were able to go along the public road freely, from March, 1932. Carleston, Sub-Collector, Palghat, also took special interest in their welfare, visited their dwellings and instructed

35. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee appointed in October 1931 a committee to enquire into and report on the disabilities of the *Adi-Dravidas* in Chirakal. It included L. S. Prabhu, P. Kumaran and T. Hariswaran Tirumumbu. Later in August 1932 there was another instance of severe ill-treatment of *Adi-Dravida* boys and girls, going to the elementary school at Kunhimangalam in the same Taluk.

his subordinate officers to facilitate their unchecked movement along the public roads. Under his benevolent influence, again, two Nayadi children were able to get admission as pupils into the elementary school at Kuzhalmannam (West), much against its Manager's wishes. Kunju Menon, Inspector of Schools in the Palghat Taluk, also did yeoman service in this field.

Under instructions from Gandhiji, 18 December 1932 was celebrated in Kerala as All-India Anti-Untouchability Day. A. V. Thakkar, Secretary, All-India Untouchability League, arrived in Malabar with G. K. Devadhar of the Servants of India Society who was the President of the D.M.R.T., to give guidance to the Harijan movement.

As early as 1923 T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer had started the *Sabari ashram* at Olavakkot, an orphanage for the children of the depressed classes who were given instruction in Hindi as well as in spinning. K. Kelappan's dreams also found concrete expression. A colony for the depressed classes was established on Pavur Kunnu near Quilandy soon after the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. It was taken over later by the Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust. Subsequently the *Sraddhananda Vidyalyaya*, a house and a school, was established by Kelappan for the benefit of the Harijans at Payyoli, his home village. Here he stayed with the inmates, taught them and trained them in handicrafts. The *vidyalyaya* was managed on *ashram* pattern and the poor, down-trodden children were enabled to have cultural advancement. After his fast at Guruvayur, Kelappan devoted more attention to this institution for which a more spacious site, a twelve-acre hill more than six miles from Tikkoti railway station, was secured. Swami Ananda Tirth also started his Harijan *ashram* at Cannanore and the Sri Narayana *Mandir* at Payyannur, with a view to give the benefits of secondary education to a few Pulaya children through an *ashram* pattern of social life. The *Kelappa Mandiram Seva Samiti* also came to be organised at Guruvayur.

The Malabar branch of the All-India Harijan Sangh³⁶ was started in April, 1933, with headquarters at Calicut under instructions from Gandhiji and A. V. Thakkar. Two *pracharaks* were

36. Kelappan was its President, P. Sankunni Nambiar, its Secretary and P. Achuthan, its Treasurer. The members were R. Suryanarayana Rao, K. Madhavan Nair, U. Gopala Menon, C. Vallabhan Nambudiri (Junior), T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, Shyamji Sundardas, E. Kannan, K. Sumukhan, T. Subramanian Tirumumb, Swami Ananda Tirth, Swami Dharmanand and V. T. Bhattatiripad, Dr. K. Raghavan, K. P. Karunakara Menon, K. M. Narayanan Nambudiripad, Guruvayurappan Naidu, C. Sheshayya, Smt. A. Madhavi Amma and others.

appointed and a hostel for the Harijan students established at Guruvayur. On 30 April, 1933 on Gandhiji's call, the All-India Harijan Day was celebrated throughout Kerala. Individuals began to offer voluntary gifts for the success of the Harijan service.³⁷

The eighth of May 1933, the day on which Gandhiji began his three-week fast, was observed as Anti-Untouchability Day on an All-India basis. It gave a greater fillip to Harijan welfare work in Malabar. On 29 May when he ended his fast the whole nation was in joy. A huge procession under Kelappan's leadership was conducted at Calicut, in which nearly 450 Harijans, after their bath and *darshan* in Srikanteswaram Temple, participated and a public meeting held. On 16 August, 1933 Gandhiji undertook another fast while in jail as the Government was not allowing him to continue the Harijan work in jail and to write articles for the *Harijan*. He was removed to Sassoon Hospital and unconditionally released on 23 August.

Gandhiji toured Malabar for work in connection with Harijan uplift from 10 to 16 January, 1934. The arrangements for receiving him were made by local committees all over the District.³⁸ Arriving at Olavakkot from Bangalore on the morning on the first day of his tour, he proceeded first to Palghat, though on the way nearly two hundred *sanatanist* demonstrators headed by Dr. Sankara Iyer (of Coimbatore) tried to obstruct his progress, thus necessitating the requisition of police help. At Palghat, Gandhiji stated that the face of a particular Nayadi with a "shrill voice" whom he had seen during his previous visit and who was afraid of even approaching him when beckoned continued to haunt his mind. He added:^{38a}

37. T. V. Subbayya Gounder, a wealthy planter of Wynad, made, according to his last will and testament, a gift of the major portion of his property and appointed five executors for the service of Harijans. In the early days of the movement he had done substantial work in spreading Gandhiji's message in Wynad. He left no children. Achutha Kurup, also of Wynad, similarly gifted away his property for Harijan service, though he had children.

38. The Reception Committee at Calicut had Seth Nagjee as the President. But as the committee insisted that all addresses intended for Gandhiji should be presented together to save time, the Malabar District Board which had already desired to present one, decided finally to do so only if Gandhiji would visit the Board's office. The Palghat Municipality, the Palghat District Board, the Tellicherry Municipality, the Calicut Municipality, and the Calicut Taluk Board presented addresses to him. At Cannanore, the Municipality did not honour him thus.

"I have come to Malabar to speak out of the very depths of my soul. There are many things in Malabar over which, as you know, I have gone into raptures. You have scenery which is second to none in the world. Man, if he behaves himself can live an easy life in Malabar. Woman in Malabar is the first in India. All the women I have seen in Malabar have a majesty which has commanded my respect. But there is nothing to be proud of in the Malabar untouchability. It is the vilest thing on earth. I want you to wipe out this shame of untouchability from Malabar. If you can do it the whole of India naturally will follow; and you can do if you will. I have entered Malabar on high hope. It is for you to fulfil it or frustrate it. Only write down this prophecy in your hearts that if untouchability, as we practise it today lives, Hinduism perishes....."

When told that the problem of the Nayadis was not acute as they were small in number and confined to a particular area, he retorted, "But our shame is not any the less because they are few in number. What matters is the spirit that keeps them untouchable and unapproachable and invisible....."

The visit to Palghat was followed by a hurried tour of the Valluvanad Taluk in course of which Gandhiji collected funds for the noble cause he had undertaken. He next reached Guruvayur where at a very important public meeting³⁹ he exhorted the people

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39. There was a blackflag demonstration at Guruvayur, organised by V. Chopala Menon, a local landlord, Dr. Naik and two *Shastris* from Bombay and others, a few minutes before Gandhiji's arrival at the place of the meeting. The demonstrators rushed to the platform to occupy it and tried to disturb the meeting. This led to a scuffle between the demonstrators and the volunteers, as a result of which two among the former became senseless, one of them bleeding through the mouth. The police remained on the scene as silent spectators. Gandhiji asked Prof. Malkani to take the injured to the local hospital. In his speech Gandhiji condemned violence in scathing terms. "Here I want only to say", said Gandhiji "that it was a matter of deep grief to me to find that these two countrymen were hurt, no matter for what cause, and no matter by whom. If any single volunteer or any single person, connected with the organisation of this meeting had a hand in assaulting these Friends I have no hesitation in saying that he had disgraced the cause and has hurt Hinduism which he considered he was serving this cause of Hinduism can only be served by men and women who are above suspicion and who have a character to keep and lose. In a movement of self-purification there is no room for any hasty word, for hasty action, for abuse, certainly not for bodily harm I would not

to do their duty to the depressed classes. Guruvayur, he added, which had already made history should add another feather to its cap by opening its temple to all Hindus.

Gandhiji then left for Cannanore, touching Pattambi and Calicut on the way. The next two days were devoted to a hurried tour of the coast line of North Malabar⁴⁰. At Tellicherry⁴¹ he stayed with V. P. Narayanan Nambiar M.L.C. On his way back to Calicut he stepped into the French settlement at Mahe where he was received by the Mayor and presented with a purse and address. The evening of 13 January that he spent at Calicut was devoted to meetings and addresses.⁴² Next morning he went to Wynad and inaugurated a co-operative society called *Sahodara Seva Sangham*. In the evening on the same day he addressed a huge gathering of people on the Calicut beach. Monday, 15 January, was his day of silence and rest and on Tuesday, after an interview with the Zamorin, he left Calicut. His one-week tour gave indeed a new life to the Harijan and temple entry movements in Malabar. He was able to collect nearly Rs. 14,000. Politics was completely eschewed from his speeches, the burden of which was that Malabar was the blackest spot on the map of India in regard to untouchability and that the people should purge themselves of it.

Gandhiji next went to Cochin and Travancore which he has already visited on two occasions earlier. At Kottayam an attempt was made to create an impression on his mind that barring temple entry the Harijans enjoyed every other right and that with their economic uplift they would be on a level of equality with the *savarna* Hindus. But Gandhiji warned the people: "You should know that it is the economic uplift of some Harijans that had made them

have untouchability removed by force or show of force or compulsion of any kind whatsoever ... I will, therefore, beseech every one of you who crowd round me wherever I go to remember that the present movement is a movement of personal, individual, self-purification and self-conviction ... After his address Gandhiji permitted Dr. Naik also to address the gathering on the injustice of the temple entry movement.

40. At Payyannur there was a black-flag demonstration against Gandhiji. He opened the Balakrishna *Vaidyasala* at Pakkanarpuram, in memory of K. V. Balakrishna Menon who had died in jail several years earlier. At Payyoli he visited the Gopalapuram Harijan Colony.

41. District Magistrate's Report.

42. He unveiled the portraits of K. Madhavan Nair in the Town Hall and in the *Mathrubhumi* office at Calicut.

conscious of the degradation to which *savarna* Hindus have reduced them. I would like you to adopt a little humility and admit that there is much to be done in Kottayam itself".

Gandhiji visited Palluruthy and Alleppey where he made a significant speech on 18 January. He refused to accept the view that religion is the greatest obstacle to India's progress. The trouble rather came from the *savarnas* who "dignified irreligion in the name of religion", and "defended sin, as if it was written with divine sanction". Gandhiji's aim was to purify Hinduism and exercise the devil of untouchability which had "disfigured it out of all recognition"; he was prepared to denounce it if ever it had sanctioned untouchability. Faith, he said, is not a delicate flower that would wither in stormy weather but is unchangeable like the Himalaya mountains. "Religion is one tree with many branches. As branches you may say religions are many, but as tree, religion is only one..... if untouchability is removed it must result in bringing all the Indians together and, if I may say in all humility, all humanity nearer. It is not a small movement but a very big movement fraught with great consequences".

On 20 January Gandhiji visited Trivandrum. By the time the Government had declared the public roads, wells and *satrams* open to all classes of people.⁴³ While Gandhiji congratulated the Government on this account, he added that social reformers could not rest contented until the State withdrew recognition to untouchability in any form. During his tour Gandhiji touched Nagercoil also.

Harijan work in Kerala began to assume wider proportions day by day. On 6 April, 1934 Kelappan resigned the office of President of the *Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh* and G. Ramachandran was deputed to take charge of it. Next month Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai became the President, G. Ramachandran serving as the Secretary. Under the Sangh's auspices, the *Harijan Balika Sadan* was started at Ottapalam on 30 September, 1934 and Miss Matilda Kallen, a trained teacher and patriot, became its matron. Under her fostering care the *Sadan* developed into a popular and useful institution. As it widened its activities, it was transferred to Calicut where it came to be named *Kasturba Sadan*.

25 September, 1935 was observed as All-India Harijan Day throughout Malabar. The *Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh* decided on 22 March, 1936 to launch a temple entry campaign throughout

43. *Mahatma*, Vol. 3.

Kerala. Organised *jathas* were to undertake the campaign. A committee was constituted with Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai as its Chairman for propaganda. Early in April, the Temple Entry Conference was convened at Calicut. 20 April was celebrated as Temple Entry Day throughout Kerala. In May Smt. Rameswari Nehru toured Malabar to shape the public opinion in favour of temple entry. Early in November A. V. Thakkar also did active propaganda in Malabar. The masses were thus mentally ready for the great social revolution that was to happen on 12 November, 1936.

CHAPTER 35

Social Awakening and Legislation

The first quarter of the twentieth century was a remarkable period in the history of social progress in Kerala. The custom-ridden society underwent revolutionary changes. A spirit of reform and rejuvenation swept over the whole of Kerala and every community felt its impact in varying degree. The precepts of the *Brahma Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj* and the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, apart from the influence of English education and western science, were chiefly responsible for the generation of the new spirit. All communities in Kerala were however confronted with great impediments to progress, arising from superstitions and obnoxious customary restrictions. Each one of them struggled hard to break the shackles that bound it to tradition and emerge into the sunshine of social freedom.

The caste system that had stratified communities on the basis of inequality was part and parcel of the economic pattern of Hindu society in the past. The system gradually began to disintegrate under the impact of new forces and there was a shift of the economic balance established between community and community for the realisation of social equality and social justice. The low caste Hindus in particular had not only to eradicate the evil customary practices amongst themselves but also to strive for getting those social and political rights which had been denied to them for ages.

The general awakening manifest in each community gave rise to communal organisation through which its members began to struggle for the recognition of their social rights. This phenomenon was an outstanding feature of the transitional period of social awakening in Kerala. The communities which were following the *Marumakkatayam* law of succession and inheritance were seething with discontent as the prevalent social structure could not be easily adjusted to the fast-changing economic requirements. This system reckoned kinship, descent and inheritance in the female line. There was also the *Makkatayam* system which emphasised the male line.¹

1. Certain communities under the *Makkatayam* system allowed equal partitioning of property among all the sons, the marriage of the girls being based on the payment of dowry. The Nambudiri community, in particular, adopted the principle of primogeniture under which the eldest son alone could inherit property or marry a girl from his own community. They were economically unprogressive in contrast to those who recognised the equality of all sons.

The continuance of both the systems in juxtaposition for a long time revealed to the people their relative merits and defects. It is recognised that among progressive communities the movement is from status to contract. Those under the *Makkatayam* system found it easier to enter the field of business and competition as they could make use of their patrimony in any venture and as their system of individual partition of property enabled quick economic advancement. Communities that upheld the free action of individuals with all their resources were bound to attain material prosperity while those under the *Marumakkatayam* system enjoyed little opportunity for individual initiative. There was naturally some mental stir among those under the latter system for, in the race for a living, it was a question of the survival of the fittest. The stage was reached that unless the handicapped communities were ready to adopt progressive steps they would certainly be threatened with economic ruin. The leaders of such communities began to organise them to gather collective strength and demanded social legislation for the eradication of various kinds of disabilities and inequality. They believed in a unified code of law governing marriage, succession to property, and other matters. After forging internal unity under a uniform code of law they desired to secure equality with the higher castes in Hindu community. The press in Kerala, in general, supported the reform movements and shaped favourable public opinion.

The classes who groaned under civic disabilities in Travancore began to organise themselves and agitate for their removal. By industry and steady perseverance the Ezhavas had become more advanced than other lower castes, particularly in the field of education. Naturally, they could not put up with the humiliating social restrictions which gnawed at their dignity and self-respect. Other communities also tried to strengthen themselves through internal reform. The customary practices had to be so modified as to meet the requirements of a progressive administration in accordance with the standards maintained in the British Indian Provinces. The Members of the Legislature also gradually began to evince a keen interest in the social problems and in the extension of the people's share in administration and social privileges. There was a change of ideals in administration, legislation and education. Communal organisations arose as well-knit units for the mutual protection of the social rights of their respective members and the promotion of their economic prosperity. Their growing social consciousness emboldened them to concert measures for their future welfare. The communal leaders prepared the psychological background through active propaganda and exerted pressure on the Government; and the latter on their part, appointed special commissioners to study the various problems and submit reports on the lines of which the

necessary legislation² would be enacted for the benefit of particular communities.

1. Ezhavas.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the condition of the Ezhavas was really deplorable. They could not, by custom, study the rudiments of grammar or the principles of Ayurveda or English and Malayalam in the Government schools.³ They could not appear for competitive examinations in law conducted by the Government, success in which would have enabled them to argue cases in the courts.⁴ They had to keep themselves at a prescribed distance away

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2. *The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore*, edited by N. Krishnaswamy Iyer and R. Ramalingam Iyer (Vols. 1-7) may be consulted for actual texts. N. Chokkalingam Pillai published the laws passed since the publication of the above volumes.
 3. Yet a few individuals distinguished themselves as great scholars. V. Kesavan Vaidyan, P. Krishnan Vaidyan, Manambur Govindan Asan (who was the preceptor of Kumaran Asan) and U. Kochu Raman Vaidyan were some of them. Besides, there were Alleppey Kumara Krishnan Vaidyan, Mattancherry Govindan Vaidyan, Paravur Kesavan Asan, Shertallai Kochi Asan and Smt. Mannantara Parvati Amma who distinguished themselves in Sanskrit studies. All of them were well-equipped to display their intellectual and artistic eminence. Long before the days of the *Malayali Memorial*, at a time when none ever dreamt of social reforms, these leaders inspired the low castes and commanded the respect of the higher castes through sheer cultural attainments.
 4. Service under the Government was not open to the Ezhavas at that time. Dr. Palpu's father, Pettayil Thachakudi Palpu gathered his knowledge of English not in any Public School to which he had no access but through private tuition at home. When he remitted fees into the Government treasury for competitive examination, the *savarna* Hindus objected to his appearance for the same and Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao eventually discouraged him. On 7 February, 1891 the Ezhavas of Kayamkulam were informed by the District School Superintendent that their children could not be admitted into educational institutions. On 21 April, 1895 P. M. Raman of Kadakkavur was informed that a member of his community could not be admitted into the English School at Attingal on account of the opposition of the local people. Having closed the gates of the schools to the Ezhavas, the Government used to state that there was no Ezhava qualified for appointments. On 18 March, 1886 P. Velayudhan, a graduate employed in Government service at Madras, was informed that he could not be admitted into Government service in Travancore.

from the *savarna* Hindus. None at the time even dreamt of the question of temple entry. The entry of the Ezhavas into many of the public roads was prohibited. They could not appear before courts of law or *Anchal* offices. They could not wear ornaments of pure gold or ride on horse back. These were only a few typical examples of the disabilities from which the Ezhavas, and of course, all the lower castes, had been suffering. To awaken them from the torpor of ages was bound to be a hard nut to crack. Among the early stalwarts who successfully attempted this task, Dr. Palpu⁵ occupies the foremost place. He fought through constitutional means for the permanent removal of the disabilities of the Ezhava community.

Dr. Palpu's place in the history of social reform is that of a peerless pioneer. He interviewed the Dewan of Travancore and conveyed to him the grievances of the Ezhava community. He was one of the most important signatories of the historic Malayali Memorial of 1891 and was responsible for the Ezhava Memorial of 1896. A believer in efficient propaganda, he organised agitation by the educated leaders of public opinion. The publication of his book, *Treatment of Tiyyas in Travancore* really enabled the masses to understand the seriousness of the injustice extended to the lower castes by the *savarnas* as well as by the Government. He represented to Lord Curzon that equality of treatment should be extended to all communities. He got the question raised in the Madras Legislature as well as in the British Parliament. Needless to add, his

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5. Born in 1863 as the second son of Thachakudi Palpu of a respectable Ezhava family at Pettah in Trivandrum, Palpu was compelled to discontinue his higher studies in college on account of pecuniary difficulties. His brother, P. Velayudhan, had to enter service in British India as a result of the caste rigidity in Travancore. Though in 1884 Palpu passed creditably the selection examination for medical education, the Government rejected his application on the ground that he was overaged. Thereupon Palpu went to Madras where he passed the L.M.S. Examination at the Medical College. One of his uncles became a Christian, for as an Ezhava, he could not enter public service in the Travancore State. On his return from Madras, Dr. Palpu also was not entertained in service by the Government of Travancore. The Government of Madras however, appointed him as Superintendent of Vaccine Depot. In 1891 he joined the Medical Service in Mysore. Having prosecuted higher studies in England he was promoted as Health Officer on his return to Mysore and later he became Jail Superintendent. He was able to acquaint Swami Vivekananda of the social disabilities of the Ezhavas on the latter's visit to Bangalore in 1892. He breathed his last on 25 January, 1950, leaving behind three sons and two daughters.

Keen about the removal of poverty, he had his own ideas about the development of cottage industries.

activities made the Government of Travancore change gradually their caste-ridden policy.

Meanwhile in 1887 Shri Narayana Guru had already started his own activities as a great religious and social reformer. He was very much pained by the social disabilities to which the low castes had been subjected at that time. He founded a temple at Aruvipuram, consecrated to Lord Shiva, an "Ezhava Shiva" as he explained. This act was indeed revolutionary so far as the dedication of a temple had been a monopoly of the Brahmins. In course of time he made the Ezhavas construct their own temples and officiate as priests therein. He threw open such temples to the lower castes and thereby proved that his passion for equality did not arise from snobbery.

From education and official appointments, Dr. Palpu's attention was diverted also to the problems of untouchability, temple entry and wasteful social ceremonies that ate away a large part of the wealth of the Ezhava community. He consulted Sri Narayana Guru⁶, N. Kumaran Asan⁷ and M. Govindan about

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6. Sri Narayana Guru was born as a member of a family known as Vayalvarathu Veedu, in Chembzhanti Village, Trivandrum District, in September, 1854. After completing his primary education, he did his advanced studies in Sanskrit under Varanapalli Raman Pillai Asan. He obtained proficiency in Tamil language also. He became a disciple of the great *yogi*, Thakkad Ayyavu. Later he became a wanderer in search of spiritual perfection. He performed penance in the sylvan surroundings of Aruvippuram. Here he formulated his great ideas and planned his future course of action.
 7. **Mahakavi** Kumaran Asan made his impact on both literature and society in Kerala. Born in April 1873 at Kayikara in Chirayinkil Taluk, he avidly studied Sanskrit in which language he could compose verses. Sri Narayana Guru advised him not to write 'love poems' in Malayalam. Later at Bangalore, he began to specialise in *Nyayasastra*, *Vyakarna* and *Alankara*. He next pursued his studies at Calcutta. On his return to Travancore he identified himself with the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* which became the sole representative body of the Ezhavas and he also edited the *Vivekodayam*, the official organ of that body. He became one of the trinity of **Mahakavis** in modern Malayalam literature including Vallathol Narayana Menon and Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer. Apart from the S.N.D.P. *Yogam*, he was associated also with the Praja Sabha, the Legislative Council, Ezhava Law Committee and other responsible bodies. His mission in life was the destruction of caste for which he strained every nerve. He gave a rude shock to conservatism in literature and social life. He expired as a result of the lamentable boat tragedy in the Pallana waters on 16 January, 1924.

the creation of communal self-respect through the organisation of *Sabhas*. Here we have the origins of the *Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam*^a (S.N.D.P.) under the leadership of the Swami, which was registered in June, 1903 with twenty-four members from the eleven *Yogams* responsible for the management of the Aruvipuram Temple. Annual conferences were arranged to be held at different centres in Kerala to promote the aims and ideals of the body. There was also the *Sri Narayana Dharma Sangham* established for the benefit of the spiritual disciples of the Swami.

In 1903 the Swami established the Shivagiri Mutt at Varkalai.^a He proclaimed his famous ideal, "one caste, one religion, one God for man". He stressed the essential goodness of man, irrespective of any religious consideration.

His ideal of 'one caste and one religion' was perhaps not comprehensible to many people in the early days. Even the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* does not seem to have tried to spread this particular message at first but it concentrated more on particular problems like freedom of movement for the Ezhavas on public roads, admission of their children into schools and representation for the Ezhavas in the services. He was convinced that if at least one community should boldly come forward for the removal of caste rigidity the other communities would be caught in the currents of social reform.

Sri Narayana Guru urged his followers to do away with the expensive and superstitious social observances and ceremonies. He asked them to aspire for freedom through education

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8. Even as early as April, 1896 we come across a meeting, at Trivandrum of the Travancore Ezhava *Sabha*. It was open to all Ezhavas in Travancore. The *Pravrithi Sabha* with a Secretary would meet at least once in a month; the Secretaries of the various *Pravrithi Sabhas* were to meet at least once in three months. The objective was to establish schools and teach boys and girls, abolish evil social customs, remove disabilities and reform temples. The Ezhava *Sabhas* existed in Neyyattinkarai, Trivandrum, Quilon, Karunagapally, Alleppey, Vaikom and Parur. Again we hear of a Literary Conference held by the Ezhavas in 1893 before the Kandhamangalam Temple in Shertallai. Ten years later under the inspiration of Sri Narayana Guru another conference was held in the theatre hall of Krishna Panicker of Cheerappanchira in Muhamma. It was presided over by Parayil Ithi Achuthan and resolutions were passed to start schools in the different parts of the Taluk. The defunct *Karappuram Dharma Paripalana Yogam* was renamed as *Karappuram Ezhava Samajam*. Under its auspices N. Kumaran Asan delivered several speeches advocating social reforms.

- 8a. Eight years later, the Sharada Temple also was established at Varkalai, apart from the Advaita Ashram at Alwaye. The swami visited Ceylon twice apart from the Advaita Ashram at Alwaye. The Swami visited Ceylon twice

and turn to industrial and commercial pursuits for material prosperity. He ridiculed untouchability and encouraged inter-marriage and inter-dining as a means of destroying it.

It is very difficult to assess the significance of the work of Sri Narayana Guru, who by his precept and example brought about revolutionary changes in society. He "laid his foundation deep in the deathless and ageless Vedas and ancient lore and Sanskrit learning hitching his wagon to the stars while casting out the dross and keeping only the pure gold". He insisted on hard work of the right type. He acted as a powerful check on crass materialism.^{8b} He was one of the great builders of the temple of the spirit, the construction of which would go on as long as humanity evolves. He belonged to the lineage of India's authentic teachers. He realised himself and also realised the needs of those around him. "Of the two species of gospels", Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer remarked, "the gospel of withdrawal within oneself and the gospel of going out of oneself to help one's fellow creatures, the latter gospel appeals to Sri Narayana Guru as it appealed to the Buddha, Ramanuja, the great Alwars and the great saints of Shaivite persuasion". His work was imperceptible and slow. He was no daring reformer in the outer sense but his message went deep into the hearts of the people. Of him, Romain Rolland said "It might be said that he was a Gnani of action, a great religious man who nevertheless based his religion on intellect and who have a very vivid sense of the requirements of the people and their social necessities. He had contributed a great deal to the uplift of the depressed classes in South India".^{8c} He was a great saint who lived in and through society and effected great reforms in an attitude of spiritual detachment. His message is of universal importance. He remains a perennial source of inspiration to the spiritual idealists and the practical reformer alike.

Until his *Mahasamadhi* on 20 September 1928, the Swami was the Life President of the *Yogam*, which intended to establish its branches over the whole of Kerala. An Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition was held along with the second annual conference of the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* at Quilon under the presidentship of the Swami. This conference generated a new vigour and gave a new vision to the Ezhavas. Annual conferences continued to be held at Alleppey, Cannanore, Calicut, Mahe, Ernakulam and other places. They represented man's attempt to conquer the social environment.

8b. A.S.P. Iyer, Article on Sri Narayana Guru, in the S.N.D.P. *Yogam* Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1953.

8c. *Travancore Information*, Vol. III, No. 2, October 1942. See Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer's speech on Sri Narayana.

In April 1905 we hear of a 'goodwill meeting' arranged by the leaders of the Ezhava and the Nair communities⁹ with a view to checking their mutual rivalry and promoting social harmony. They disapproved of the conduct and attitude of the reactionaries in either community, decided to implement the decision of the Government to admit all children into schools irrespective of their caste, and expressed satisfaction with the Government's efforts to distribute offices irrespective of religious or communal considerations.

At first Dr. Palpu had been the soul of the new reform movement, but as he could not always come down to Kerala from Mysore State, he entrusted the organisational work to Kumaran Asan towards the middle of 1905, having already come to be known as the Booker T. Washington of the freedom struggle of the Ezhavas. Kumaran Asan thereafter continued to be the leading star until 1919 when he withdrew from the Secretaryship of the *Yogam*. He rendered yeoman service to the organisation by convening meetings, enrolling members and making representations to the Government on the disabilities of the Ezhavas from time to time. The Dewans of the period were sympathetic to his aspirations and gradually modified the policy of the Government in accordance with the changing social outlook. Under Asan's leadership the Ezhavas became progressively conscious of their rights in society. Besides Asan, Mulur S. Padmanabha Panicker,¹⁰ himself a poet, was actually associated with the *Yogam*.

The conferences of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* were characterised by political resolutions passed by the participators to further the

9. P. Kesava Pillai, C. V. Kunjuraman, T. V. Padmanabhan Unnithan, Varanapally Govinda Panicker, Azakath Padmanabha Kurup and K. C. Kunjan Vaidyan were some of those who were associated with the meeting.

10. Mulur S. Padmanabha Panicker was born in March 1869 at Parumala in Tiruvalla Taluk. Early in his career he evinced keen literary taste. It was difficult indeed in those days for a member of lower caste to get recognition as a poet; and in a way he paved the way for the recognition of N. Kumaran Asan as poet. He tried, in his poems, to maintain the self-respect of the down-trodden communities. He fought against the expensive social customs. Between 1914 and 1930 he served several times as Member of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. He did much organisational work in connection with the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* in the Taluks of Chengannur, Tiruvalla and Mavelikara. He expired on 21 March, 1931.

interests of the Ezhava community.¹¹ These resolutions reveal their growing political awareness.

It was at this stage that T. K. Madhavan¹² began to make his personality felt in public life in Kerala. "A man of remarkable

11. The conference held in 1906 studied the grievances of the Ezhavas regarding the Government's educational policy and the question of their representation in the Legislature and the Town Improvement Committees. In 1907 it was decided to choose N. Kumaran Asan as the representative of the *Yogam* in the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. In 1910 the meeting resolved to remind the Government of the need to nominate a member representing backward communities, in the Legislature. In 1917 at the annual general conference it was resolved to request the Government to so amend the rules of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly as to enable the Ezhavas to choose their representatives like other representatives. In 1918 the conference strongly supported the Ezhava Memorial, submitted to the Sri Mulam Assembly in its fourteenth session, to the effect that the Ezhavas, should be appointed, if qualified, in Revenue and Military Departments.
12. Born in 1885, Madhavan belonged to a highly respected family. Though his scholastic studies were interrupted by indigence his aptitude for journalism kept him intellectually active. He was one of the impressive speakers at the second session of the *Yogam*. He edited the *Desabhimani* for a considerable time but projected himself into public vision only later, which fact indicates that he "created his paper and that his paper has not created him". The *Desabhimani* drew the attention of the Government to the disabilities of the Ezhavas and galvanised the younger generation into activity. His interview with Gandhiji at Tirunelveli in 1921 "was the starting point of his interesting career". Though riding on the crest of a great wave of popular enthusiasm, he realised that public appreciation should be founded on solid work on his part as otherwise it might turn out to be ephemeral. While formerly the Ezhava leaders tried to secure, through memorials, a higher representation in the services, Madhavan believed that political influence would increase if only the economic condition were to be improved. He launched the Prohibition campaign, as alcoholism was the main evil of society. He gave it a new momentum, carrying his message to the villages. He seems to have later dropped it, however, like a "hot potato" and taken to another aspect of social work, the campaign against untouchability. This zealous crusade widened into an organised demand for the recognition of civic rights and temple entry.

talents, organising capacity", says K. M. Panikkar, "it was he who first recognised the fact that the solution of communal questions cannot be on a purely local basis but must be related to the wider conditions in India".¹³ He expressed his ideas through the *Desabhimani*, started in 1915 and induced the Central Committee of the S N. D. P. *Yogam* to resort to a constructive programme of action for the realisation of civic liberty, temple entry, and Prohibition and for the eradication of untouchability.

As a result of T. K. Madhavan's efforts, before the year 1928 ran out, the number of members in the *Yogam* rose to 50684; and there were 255 branch *Yogams* and 10 Unions. Six annual conferences of the body were held under his leadership which indeed made the *Yogam* a lively organisation.¹⁴

The Vaikom Satyagraha, in this connection "lifted an antiquated custom from the plane of provincialism and put it into the pillory of the world, to be indiscriminately pelted at in derision by strange onlookers. Vaikom Satyagraha made Travancore stink in the delicate nostrils of the West", though the Blue-books had been painting a glowing picture of it as a progressive State. Madhavan was responsible for this "cruel disillusionment". The active support of the Indian National Congress for, and "the magnificent response" of the Nair Community to, the successful Vaikom Satyagraha were primarily due to his qualities of leadership, organisational ability and idealism. He asserted "the inalienable right of the depressed classes to complete social and religious equality". His "frail body enclosed an indomitable spirit" and he rose above the claims of his own community and fought for all who suffered from social injustice. He was characterised by a "sparkling, yet not boisterous, humour". Madhavan, "if not exactly a giant, is not a pigmy either. From our accustomed low level he has reached the heights of Olympus..... The truth is that he towers above his immediate contemporaries in the sleepy hollow of Travancore.....". (O. M. Thomas, *Under the Knife*, pp. 68-76.) He expired in April, 1930.

13. K. M. Panikkar's Introduction to the Biography of Madhavan by P. K. Madhavan and Kesavan.
14. They were those held at Karunagappally, Muthukulam, Eramallur, Palluruthy, Neyyattinkarai and Kottayam.

Two other leaders of eminence in the Ezhava community were C. V. Kunjuraman¹⁵ and K. Ayyappan.¹⁶ When the Dewan, Sankarasubba Iyer, gave the Ezhavas the right to start their own schools, it was exercised for the first time in Mayyanad, thanks to Kunjuraman. He rendered much social service in the field of education and was fortunate to get a group of dedicated young men who are ready to work under his leadership. He was bent upon uprooting the social customs that had economically ruined the Ezhava community in the past. He was responsible for a mental revolution conducive to social progress.

K. Ayyappan rose to fame, when in 1917 at the age of 25 he, along with twenty-one other families, dined with the members of the Pulaya community in the same *pandal*. All the participators in that function were subjected to severe social ostracism¹⁷ laid by the *Desa Sabha* which only served to bring out his latent qualities of social leadership. He immediately started the *Sahodara Sangham* movement and boldly stuck to his principles. The movement gathered more members in course of time.¹⁸ With the entry of the

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15. He was born in February, 1871 in Mayyanad. He studied at first in a free school of the L. M. S. and later in the Quilon High School. He soon disclosed his proficiency in Malayalam literature. He appreciated the growing importance of journalism and began, though unofficially, to publish the *Kerala Kaumudi* from Mayyanad since 1911. On account of financial difficulties he gave up the career of a teacher under the Government and having passed the Criminal Test Examination of those days began to practise in the Magistrate's Court at Parur. He joined the Editorial Board of the *Desabhimani*. He next took up the editorship of the *Malayala Rajyam* at Quilon. He was one of the most important persons connected with the formation of the Travancore State Congress. Withdrawing from that body, he led a quiet life afterwards and expired on 10 April, 1949. The narrowness of the sphere of his activities might have stifled the full growth of his personality; yet he broke through the retrogressive forces of environment. There were of course contradictions and inconsistencies in his attitude and opinions but he can claim to have rendered considerable service to society.
 16. K. Ayyappan was born at Cherayi. He went in for English education. Well-known as "Sahodaran" Ayyappan, he came into conflict with several points of view. He was second to none as a social revolutionary.
 17. This implied that the services of the village barber and washerman would not be available to them. They would not be invited to marriage functions or given water by the members of the community.
 18. Thus in 1917 the *Karappuram Sahodara Samajam* was organised and inter-dining held on several occasions. A *Sadhu Jana Dharma Sanketam* also was conducted in which boys of the Pulaya, Pariah and Ullada communities were fed along with the Ezhava children.

Sahodara Sangham into the S.N.D.P. *Yogam*, the platform of the latter became one for the spread of the message of 'one caste' ideal. The movement for the reform of the Ezhava community developed into that for the removal of the caste system. Ayyappan emphasised communal justice which, he brought, was the proper basis for the spirit of nationalism.

The S.N.D.P. *Yogam* gradually spread its branches in Cochin State also. Even before its registration Sri Narayana Guru had toured several parts of the State where many householders became his disciples. At the first annual conference of the *Yogam* at Aruvipuram, a large number of delegates from Cochin had been present.¹⁹ The sixth annual conference was held in 1909 at Ernakulam under the presidentship of Oyitti Krishnan; and at the Quilon Conference in 1919 it was resolved to wait in deputation on the Government of Cochin for the removal of the disabilities of the Ezhavas of the State. As Travancore, Cochin and Malabar were three separate entities at that time it was also considered desirable to have a separate S.N.D.P. organisation for Cochin.

Shri Bodhananda Swamy gave effective leadership to the S.N.D.P. movement in Cochin.²⁰ It was first organised in 1916 to fight against untouchability and other evils of society. Next year, a petition was submitted to the Maharaja of Cochin:

"It is a great pain to us that we have been placed lower than other communities of the State in the matter of rights and privileges granted to the subjects of the State. Even now we have no admission to schools, particularly girls' schools. We could not go near to some of the Anchal Offices..... We have no request that we should get very high places. Our request is very, very moderate. We have only the request that we should be given the same privileges and rights, which a convert to Islam or Christianity would get, while remaining within the fold of Hinduism. We are not against but only too glad that such rights and privileges should be extended to the other Hindu communities of a lower rank than us."

In the early stages of the fight for rights initiated by the Ezhavas, there were some unpleasant incidents in localities where

19. Karattu Parambil S. Krishnan was elected as the *Yogam* Director from Cochin.

20. He appealed to all the Ezhavas for their co-operation and the first meeting was held on 14 April, 1916 at Trichur under the presidentship of C. Krishnan, Editor of the *Mitavadi*, Calicut. Murkoth Kumaran addressed the gathering.

Caste Hindus were powerful. To consider possible remedial measures, an All-Kerala Tiyya Conference under the presidentship of Kottieth Ramunni was held, under the auspices of the *Cochin Ezhava Samajam*, at Paran Hall in Calicut. A Satyagraha group was formed and a fund collected.²¹

In accordance with the Quilon resolution, mentioned earlier, a deputation met Mr. Bhore, Dewan of Cochin. As a result, the disabilities connected with admission into schools were removed. When the Legislative Council was constituted, the representation of the Ezhavas could not be disregarded by the Government as among them there were able and active men. The Civil Marriages Act, adult suffrage, the creation of a Staff Selection Board, the removal of untouchability—such matters came to be discussed in the Legislature as a result of the strenuous efforts of the Ezhava representatives.

In 1927 at the annual conference that was held at Palluruthy the name *Ezhava Samajam* (of Cochin) was changed to *Tiyya Mahajana Sabha* which was registered during the next year.²² As days went by the organisation gathered more strength and popularity.²³

About 1933 the Ezhavas of Travancore were split into two groups, representing respectively the conservative elements and the new aggressive generation who demanded the supplanting of 'one caste' one religion, one God' theory by their own "no caste, no religion, no God" doctrine. An All-Travancore Youth League was formed in Shertallai Taluk on 31 July, 1933 under the presidentship of C. Kesavan. The special conference of the S.N.D.P. Yogam held at Changanacherry passed the resolution in support of abstention. This event also widened the gulf between the two sections.

21. It was from this fund that money was spent in 1920 for the conduct of the Thanisseri Riot Case.

22. N. Kumaran who had retired as Judge, High Court of Travancore, suggested at the conference held at Mattancherry in 1936 under his Presidentship that the name *Tiyya Mahajana Sabha* should be again changed. Accordingly in 1938 the name, '*The Cochin S. N. D. P. Yogam*' was adopted.

23. In 1946 under the auspices of the Ernakulam Yogam was held a conference of the Declaration of Rights. In the document then drafted it was stated that the Ezhavas should have, along with other communities and in co-operation with them, opportunity to work for general progress and prosperity and that, for the achievement of such a right, they would adopt all ways, legal and constitutional. There was a proposal to organise a federation of the S. N. D. P. *Yogams* of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar.

There was some confusion at the conference held on 17 August, 1933 at Alleppey²⁴ but the radical section emerged victorious. Subsequently at the meeting of the *Ezhava Youth League* held on 16 September, 1933 at Karunagapally under the presidentship of K. Ayyappan, a resolution was passed to the effect that the *Ezhavas* constituted a distinct community, existing independent of Hinduism.²⁵

Meanwhile, another body, the *Ezhava Mahajana Sabha*, was registered at Trivandrum. It held its first meeting on 23 October 1933. It was organised, C. Kesavan felt, as a rival to the *S.N.D.P. Yogam*. C. Kesavan was a leader with a revolutionary outlook and he, indeed, gave a new momentum to the *Ezhava* organisation, particularly on the political planes²⁶.

Apart from social work, the *S.N.D.P. Yogam* was also interested in political and administrative problems, on which several resolutions were passed from time to time. They demanded communal representation, the introduction of Prohibition, proper legislation to regulate the relations between landlord and tenant in Malabar, recognition of the right of the *Ezhavas* to enter military service, adult franchise and proportionate representation in the Legislature. The internal strength and solidity achieved by the community gradually enabled its voice to be heard in regard to political, administrative and constitutional matters in Travancore.

Especially after the formation of the Civic Rights League there had been a healthy rivalry among the various communities to make their members competent to serve in the various offices. Their

24. C. Krishnan had been proposed to the chair but Madhavan Vaidyan was found occupying it. This led to some unpleasantness for a while. The Youth League wanted a declaration to the effect that the *Ezhavas* were not Hindus but it was finally decided to ascertain public opinion on the matter. C. Krishnan, N. Krishnan and C. Kesavan were made President, Vice-President and Secretary respectively of the *Yogam*.

25. P. N. Krishna Pillai attended this conference and supported the *Ezhava Youth League* in their bold declaration. Such declarations brought home to the Government and the public the seriousness of the problem of social inequality in the State. (See C. Kesavan's "*Jeevitha Samaram*".)

26. In 1938 the *Yogam* had on its rolls nearly two lakhs of members, 640 branches and 16 unions or Taluk organisations. It had vast property and controlled several religious and educational institutions. Its management was vested in a Board of Directors, consisting of 50 members, elected at the annual session. (Travancore Directory for 1938).

agitation and efforts led to social legislation that contributed in no small measure to the evolution of well-integrated communities with uniform laws regarding institutions like marriage or property.

In March, 1916 a committee had been appointed by the Government of Travancore to frame a Draft Bill for regulating the law of marriage and inheritance among the Ezhavas;²⁷ in June, two more non-official members were appointed to serve on the committee.²⁸ The committee suggested in February, 1917 that they should be empowered to enquire into the question of partition and that the Draft Bill should contain a provision regarding testamentary deposition. These suggestions were supported by the Ezhava Members of the Popular Assembly at its thirteenth session. Thereupon the Government reconstituted the committee in 1918 while accepting the recommendations.²⁹

The committee, after enquiry, submitted on 1 January 1919, their report and a Draft Bill to the Government who accepted them after ascertaining public opinion. The committee had broadly surveyed the existing conditions and tendency among the Ezhavas following *Marumakkathayam* and the mixed system of inheritance and recommended that the *Marumakkathayam* Ezhavas and Ezhava converts to other religions in the State should be excluded from the operation of the proposed legislation. They made provisions for the legal recognition of both the forms of marriage then in vogue in the community, the prohibition of polyandry and polygamy, the devolution of self-acquired property on wife and children in case of intestacy, *thavazhi* partition in respect of *tarwads*; and individual partition in respect of *Makkatayam* property and full power of testation over self-acquired property.³⁰

27. G. O. No. J. 2888 dated 19 March, 1916.

28. G. O. No. J. 5184 dated 21 June, 1916. The Committee had V. Subba Iyer as President and six Ezhava gentlemen as members.

Originally there were, besides the President, two official and two non-official members representing Trivandrum and Quilon divisions; again three out of the four members followed the mixed system of inheritance while the last adopted pure *Marumakkatayam* system. It was thought desirable to give representation to the Ezhavas of the Kottayam division who followed pure *Makkatayam* system.

29. The re-constituted committee had P. N. Boothalingam Iyer as President and M. Govindan, N. Kumaran, N. Kumaran Asan K. M. Krishnan, V. K. Kochunni Vaidyan and K. C. Kunjuraman as members. (G. O. No. J. 2255 dated 6 March 1918).

30. Regulation III of 1100 (1925). The Ezhava Regulation—A Regulation relating to marriage, succession, family management and partition among the Ezhavas.

The Bill generally followed the Nair Regulation of 1913. According to prevalent custom, *Putavakotu* form of marriage was being adopted. Sri Narayana Guru however had asserted that a marriage is valid if there should be a gift of the bride by the father or by some other relative; and also that there should be *panigrahanam* as well as *Mangalyadharanam* accompanied by recitation of *mantras*. Thus a religious sanctity came to be attached to marriage. Out of deference to the wishes of the community, the committee considered it desirable to include and recognise these changes as well.

The Bill was introduced in the Legislative Council in 1920 and finally passed into law on 12 February, 1925.³¹

(2) NAMBUDIRIS:

The Nambudiris constituted a community in Kerala enjoying several social rights and privileges in the past. They were at the apex of the Hindu society, highly prosperous as owners of land. They made their own distinctive contribution to the culture of the country. Till the close of the nineteenth century they remained, more or less, supinely indifferent to the benefits of western education. Students of Sanskrit, they were well-versed in *Vedic* and *Shastraic* lore but showed reluctance to adjust themselves to the revolutionary changes that gripped Indian society at the time.

A false sense of social prestige prevented them from taking to vocations like agriculture, trade or industry. The Nambudiri women spent their time in the gloomy interior of their residence, observing *purdah* while going out and wearing only brass bangles in the orthodox fashion. In 1897 we notice an instance of a Nambudiri woman being accused of prostitution and excommunicated after the customary trial. In the Administration Report of Travancore for 1910, it is recorded that in that year only 976 children in the Nambudiri community had joined school. The first instance, perhaps, of the education of a Nambudiri girl on modern lines was when Kurumathur Parameswaran Nambudiripad in North Malabar sent his daughter in 1911 to an elementary school. The Nambudiris were over-ridden by custom³² and it was extremely difficult for them to break the shackles of tradition.

The *Yogakshema Mahasabha* was started in about 1910-11 to put an end to the reactionary practices observed by the Nambudiri

31. *Travancore Gazette* dated 21 April, 1925.

32. When a Nambudiri travelled in train with his family in Cochin State in 1912 other Nambudiris decided that he should atone for his sin of commission.

community and guide its members along the path of modern knowledge and social progress. The *Mahasabha*, founded at Trichur, had *Upasabhas* or branches in the *mofussil*. A weekly called *Yogakshemam* also came to be regularly published as the organ of social reform. Kurur Unni Nambudiri was the leader of the progressive section who fought against the forces of reaction. He did not want the Nambudiri youth to pursue, without discretion, the mirage of the west but thought that through suitable social reforms, education and industry, consistent with the changing times, they would be able to reconcile the prospects of the future with the traditions of the past. Under his leadership the *Mahasabha* did much to bring about unity of ideals and opinions among the Nambudiris. He stressed the need for English education so that they might play an important role in modern social life, and through steady propaganda he was able to win over the reactionaries to his cause. As a result, at the sixth or the seventh annual conference of the *Mahasabha*, the need for English education was unanimously recognised. Within a decade a large number of Nambudiris who would have otherwise looked upon success in the Vedic test at Kadavallur as the climax of their academic attainment got the benefits of modern education which enabled them to enrich the public life of the country substantially.

Another important figure was Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad. Born in January, 1896 he studied, from his 7th to 17th year, the whole of *Rig Veda Samhita* and later pursued his studies in English until 1917. From 1913 until 1919 he was actively associated with the *Yogakshema Mahasabha* and in 1918 he took a leading part in the non-violent resistance to the authority of the Trichur *Vadhyam*, the hereditary head of the Nambudiri community belonging to the Trichur Yogam.

The *Nambudiri Yuvajana Sangham* or Youth League came to be formed as a radical organisation under the leadership of V. T. Bhattatiripad and K. N. Kuttan Nambudiri. They published a monthly, the *Unni Nambudiri* to disseminate progressive ideas of reform among the members of the community. Their ideals of social revolution were the same as those of Dr. Palpu and K. Ayyappan who had fought against caste distinction and social autocracy. Born on 24 March 1896, V. T. Bhattatiripad drew, as a student, his inspiration from Lokmanya Tilak and served, along with ten Nambudiri youths, as a volunteer at the Ottappalam Political Conference presided over by T. Prakasam. It was the deep sense of nationalism that he imbibed in the early days which gave warmth

to the great social service he rendered to the Nambudiri community.³³ The *Yuva Jana Sangham* spread the ideals of the Indian National Congress and did much in regard to Prohibition and the boycott of foreign cloth. Its rebellious members removed the sacred thread from their bodies, condemned polygamy in which the elders indulged and advocated the re-marriage of widows. One of them was P. S. Nambudiri of Cheruvathani, near Kunnankulam, who got his hair cut in modern fashion and went on foot from Trichur to Kasergod to make the members of the Nambudiri community conscious of the benefits of the modern system of education.

Another leader of progressive views was B. Brahmattattam Nambudiripad.³⁴ He studied the Vedas and Upanishads and was highly proficient in Sanskrit literature. Under the inspiration of Gandhian ideals he decided to eradicate the evils of untouchability, doing propaganda among the members of his family first and organised spinning in his own house. At a time when the *Yogakshema Sabha* thought that participation in nationalist politics would be a hindrance to the internal reform of the Nambudiri community, he was chosen as the President of the Cherpulacherry *Mandal* Congress; and later he was arrested and put in jail by the authorities. After his release he was subjected to social ostracism by the Nambudiri community and was not allowed even to meet his mother as she lay on her death-bed.

33. His drama *Atukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku* powerfully portrayed the social evils of the times and its staging, opposed by the conservatives, opened the eyes of all to them. Another literary work that promoted social reform was the novel, '*Apphante Makal*' written by M. Bhavatratan Nambudiripad. It advocated English education of Nambudiri boys and girls and referred to the existence of the system of polygamy, the marriage of young girl to old Nambudiri gentlemen, the practice of younger sons marrying girls of lower communities (being forbidden to marry girls of Nambudiri community), and the system of ex-communication or social ostracism.

34. Article written by K. V. G. Nair in the *Mathrubhumi* dated 4 October, 1964. He was born in 1897, of an orthodox Nambudiri family in Cherpulacherry. He began active political work in 1918. He was arrested on the suspicion that he was partly responsible for the Moplah rebellion of 1921 and was subjected to severe police persecution. He was kept in the Bellary Jail but finally released on the order of the High Court of Madras on 1 September, 1922. He settled down thereafter at Pattambi, socially ignored by his own community. He participated in the Vaikom Satyagraha and the Guruvayur Satyagraha and was greatly attracted by socialist ideas. He expired on 26 July, 1964 at Pattambi.

E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad was also drawn into the vortex of social reform. Born in June, 1909, he discontinued his studies as a student at Trichur and exhorted the members of his community to give up their role as parasites on society but enter the various professions and establish a new social system based on work and production.³⁵

On 20 February, 1931 was passed the Travancore Malayala Brahmin Regulation to define and amend the law of succession and family management of the Nambudiri community. Provision was made for the better administration of *tarwad* affairs, the improvement of the rights of junior members and the prescription of rules of intestate succession in respect of self-acquired property. The impediments to healthy family life put in the way of junior members as well as the uncertainties in the law of succession were removed. The *Yogakshema Mahasabha* accepted these principles in general.

As regards Cochin State, the leaders of the Nambudiri community had represented to the Government that the Nambudiri youth should receive the benefit of English education. They offered to place a portion of the communal endowment funds at the disposal of the Government for that purpose. To meet their demand a Draft Bill was prepared and sent to the Government of Madras for the expression of their views.³⁶ The Government of Madras asked for a detailed exposition of the proposal, particularly in regard to the nature and amount of the endowments affected, because a few memorials had already been received by them against the proposed Nambudiri Regulation.³⁷

35. At the thirty-fourth annual conference of the *Yogakshema Maha Sabha* held at Ongallur in December 1945, E. M. Sankaran Nambudiripad who presided stated that the Nambudiris should be free to marry girls from any other community and that similar privilege should be extended to the Nambudiri women as well. At that conference resolutions were passed on the disabilities of the Nambudiri women concerning marriage, the abolition of dowry system and *adhivedanam*, the formation of Women's Associations, and desirable amendments of law concerning the Nambudiri community in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar.

36. Letter to British Resident dated 28 January, 1920.

37. Letter from the British Resident dated 1 March, 1921.

This Regulation might have affected eight institutions³⁸ in particular. All that it proposed was to adapt education to modern wants and authorise expenditure of the funds for that purpose.

38. See the note prepared by the Devaswam Superintendent. One of the institutions was *Tekke Madhom* (Mutt) in Trichur which had extensive property in Travancore, Cochin and British Malabar, yielding an annual rent of about 80,000 *para*hs of paddy. Its object was the general advancement of learning among the members of the Nambudiri community. The Swamiar or the trustee, it was stated, appeared to think that the property was for his own benefit and ignored the original interests served by the institution. Even the occasional gatherings had been discontinued, at which scholarly discussions used to be conducted in the past.

As regards the *Natuil Mutt*, it was situated in Trichur and it derived income from extensive property, estimated to be nearly one lakh of *para*hs of paddy. It was reported that the affairs of the Mutt were in chaos, its authorities being involved in civil litigation. There was no arrangement at all for imparting instruction to the community in general but the income was being frittered away. The Mutt possessed a few Devaswoms one of which was situated in Palghat.

The *Sukapuram Mutt* was situated in Kondayur in Talapilli Taluk near Desamangalam. There were branch Mutts at Shoranur and Kuttannur with temples attached. This institution was of the nature of a religious and charitable society. The annual income could be estimated to be about 20,000 *para*hs of paddy. The managing trustees were Nambudiris called *Somayajipads* belonging to Sukapuram in British Malabar. The purpose of the Mutt was the advancement of learning and the encouragement of *karma* or ritual; yet the income after meeting the expenditure on account of the temples was being apportioned among the Somayajis. According to the judgment in O. S. No. 32/1898 of the Sub-Court, Palghat, all the married Nambudiris in *Sukapuram gramam* who had performed *somayaga* would be qualified for selection as members of the *Sukapuram yogam* and such qualified members would be selected once in twelve years. It was quite unreasonable to suppose that an endowment would be founded merely to divide the surplus income among an indefinite number of persons of a community; it was rather intended to afford facilities for religious study in the special branch relating to rituals.

The *Irinjalakuda Sabha* in Mukundapuram Taluk had lost much of its property in Cochin while the exact extent of the same in Malabar was unknown. The *Sabha* had indeed ceased to function as a religio-charitable institution and its income was being appropriated by the managing Nambudiris.

The major portion of the *Perumanam Sabha's* property was in British Malabar, reported to have been endowed by the ruling chiefs and nobles of old. The committee members, styled *karmis*, were said to be twenty-

The agitation organised against the Nambudiri Regulation was artificial. It was a fact that several Nambudiris strongly desired to reap the benefits of English education and even started a school at Edakunni near Trichur. The proposed legislation was not intended to interfere with the religious susceptibilities of the community or to divert funds to non-educational purposes or to extend its benefit to other communities.

However the Government of Madras was of the view³⁹ that no measure enacted by the Government of Cochin could affect income derived from outside the State by any institution. Considering the legal issues involved, the Government of Cochin finally decided⁴⁰ to drop the Nambudiri Religious and Charitable Endowment Regulation in 1923.

(3) NAIRS

The social life of the Nairs, below the Nambudiris in social rank, had been characterised by the regional *kara* organisation in

four in number and they used to divide the surplus income among themselves. In this case also the original objective of the institution was lost sight of.

The *Chowannur Sabha Mutt* was said to have been endowed by a Nambudiri lady who preferred to lead a celibate life and wanted to remove the ignorance of the members of her community by setting apart her property for imparting Sanskrit education. The property was situated in five villages of Talapilli Taluk. Men of literary merit used to be appointed by the Maharaja as *Samudayam* to preside over the Mutt and its affairs.

The *Edakolathur Sabha* consisted of *Bhattatiri* Brahmins, mostly inhabiting Peramangalam and adjacent villages of Talappilli Taluk and specialising in particular branches of Vedic studies. There is no definite information regarding the founder or the purpose for which the *Sabha* was constituted.

There was also the *Koosmath or Udayathingeswarath Pandita Sabha* in Kumbalam village in Kanayannur Taluk. It was originally a school at which the Nambudiris were taught *Sastras* and *Vedas*. The school fell into disuse but the property was managed by a few *adhikaris* of the *Sabha*. As a result of gross mismanagement the institution was assumed by the Government under a Proclamation dated 14 July, 1898. The temples attached to it came to be amalgamated with the Tripunitura group and managed by the Devaswom Department.

39. British Resident's Letter dated 17 August, 1922.

40. Rao Bahadur P. Narayana Menon's (Dewan) letter dated 28 November, 1923.

Travancore. Social ceremonies as those in connection with marriage or death brought together the members of the Nair community residing in a *kara*. Life in a *kara* was made as far self-sufficient as possible and the services of the barber, washerman, carpenter or blacksmith were always locally available. The Nairs in a *kara* maintained their own temple and conducted its festivals; they used to meet once in a month and settle common affairs. The chief or *Pradhani* of a *kara* was called Kurup or Panikar or Asan. Formerly the *Kara Yogam* Assembly used to collect the taxes due to the Government and exercise judicial and police functions to some extent within the *kara* limits.

The importance of the *kara* organisation gradually declined in the course of the nineteenth century as a result of various factors. The Nair community became economically degenerate. They continued to uphold conservative conventions⁴¹ that had outlived their utility. A Nair was officially referred to as *Malayala Sudra*, a term which he considered as derogatory⁴² to his social dignity and individual status. Within the Nair community itself there was a large number of sub-castes, their mutual petty differences leading to social disharmony. Unable to offend traditional custom, the Nairs wasted much money over ceremonies like the puberty ceremony and the *talikettu kalyanam* and became bankrupt practically. They believed in and upheld rigid untouchability. The *Marumakkatayam* system of succession gradually proved to be a disruptive rather than a cohesive force; the selfish administration of a Nair *tarwad* by its eldest male member led to fraternal disputes and economic ruin. The children of a Nambudiri through a Nair woman, with no legal title to paternal property, posed a serious social problem. Altogether the Nairs were in a deplorable condition at the end of nineteenth century.

A few far-sighted leaders realised the need for rousing the Nairs from their state of torpor, effecting communal cohesion and stabilising their economic condition through the eradication of the

41. In 1905 there was an attempt to excommunicate a Nair woman of Edappally for having travelled in train to see her ailing husband. Those who cut their hair were not permitted to enter any temple in Cochin and one was expected to keep at least six inches of hair on the head. (News item on 18 October, 1911).

42. See *Ente jivita smaranakal* by Mannath Padmanabhan.

prevalent social evils. Thus in 1886 was started the *Malayali Sabha*⁴³ which soon grew with several branches and members. C. Krishna Pillai,^{43a} along with Kavalam Nilakanta Pillai and K. P. Shankara Menon,⁴⁴ was mainly responsible for this organisation. After it declined in importance, a new association came into being at Trivandrum in 1905. It was the *Keraleeya Nair Samajam*, of which C. Krishna Pillai was the Secretary.^{44a}

43. Under the inspiration of Prof. Ross and Dr. Harvey several educated young men in Trivandrum thought in terms of the reform of the Nair Community. They started the *Malayali Social Union* which, under the influence of P. Thanu Pillai, gradually extended its activities. Its name was subsequently changed into the *Malayali Sabha*. The aims of the *Malayali Sabha* were to encourage deserving students, establish educational institutions and promote social welfare. It was patronised by the Maharaja and it spread its activities in Central and North Travancore too. It soon became a powerful organisation with 900 members, 25 schools and 14 branch associations. A newspaper called the *Malayali* also was started under the leadership of C. Krishna Pillai and C. V. Raman Pillai. (See the Biography of C. V. Raman Pillai in Malayalam by P. K. Parameswaran Nair).

43a. He was born at Karamanai, in Trivandrum, in 1851. He worked in the Education Department under the Government of Travancore. He was the Secretary of the Committee for the Nair Marriage Regulation. Both Dr. Palpu and Mr. Pillai worked earnestly for the advancement of their respective communities and included in them the spirit of self-reliance and self-respect. Mr. Pillai played a very active role in the public life of the State. T. Rama Rao, Dewan, suspected his loyalty to the Government and transferred him to Mavelikara, which rather gave him ample scope for unhampered social work in the Northern regions of Travancore. The *Malayali Sabha*, under him, agitated for the admission of Nair students into the Sanskrit School which had been denied to them on the ground that they were Sudras. He expired on 8 July, 1916.

44. He was a pioneer, one of the early leaders who tried to place before the Government of Travancore the rights and grievances of the people. His younger brother was K. P. Padmanabha Menon, the great historian of Kerala.

44a. C. Krishna Pillai had started the *Travancore Nair Samajam* at Trivandrum on 13 June, 1903 which subsequently held a Nair conference at Shertallai. C. V. Raman Pillai and P. Ayyappan Pillai established another association called the *Keraleeya Samajam*, which however could achieve little. So, Krishna Pillai and Raman Pillai joined together and re-named the *Travancore Nair Samajam* as the *Keraleeya Nair Samajam*.

The aims of this organisation were to unify the members of the Nair community irrespective of the numerous regional and group differences within it, put an end to the expensive and superstitious ceremonies and endless litigation that had spelt ruin to the community, arouse its interest in productive efforts, regulate the marital status of the Nair women and abolish the uneconomic *Marumakkathayam system*.^{44b} This body organised some *karayogams* and held a few annual conferences in different places. Eminent persons like M. Krishnan Nair, C. Sankaran Nair, C. Karunakara Menon and K. P. Raman Menon presided over them. At one of its annual conferences it adopted a resolution to the effect that the Nairs were not Sudras. It was progressively realised that the united effort of the Nairs of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar would be necessary to achieve social progress. In 1912 the *Keraleeya Nair Samajam* was registered under the Travancore Company Regulation. As a result of its early efforts the Nairs became a self-respecting community, conscious of the futility of several ruinous customary practices.

A few enthusiastic idealists with a vision of the future now came forward for social reform. Kainikkara Govinda Pillai cherished progressive views and firmly believed that the basis of social reform is the education of women. He started a monthly called the *Nair* as well as a newspaper, the *Subhashini* at Changanacherry. R. Maswara Pillai rendered yeoman service to the Nair community by founding a number of *karayogams* and Malayalam Schools, apart from a High School at Mannar. The death of Govinda Pillai in 1910 seemed to create a void, though only for a short while.

Mannath Padmanabha Pillai, at this stage, organised a group of young men and, on his initiative, a Nair *karayogam* was registered at Perunna in Changanacherry in 1912. Organisational details were soon worked out. In October, 1913 this *karayogam* expanded into the *Changanacherry Taluk Nair Samajam*, managed by an Executive Committee, with Padmanabha Pillai as Secretary.

There was a feeling at the time that the *Kerala Nair Samajam* was not rendering any effective service to the Nair community. It was this which prompted fourteen young men, including Padmanabha Pillai, to meet at Mannath House in Perunna on 31 October, 1914, and solemnly take, before a *bhadradeepa*, an oath to the effect that they would devote the rest of their lives to the service of the Nair community, without causing offence to the

44b. Nair Service Society Golden Jubilee Publication in Malayalam, p. 14.

other communities. Thus was the origin of the *Nair Samudaya Bhrithya Jana Sangha*. It was organised on the pattern of the ideals of the Servants of India Society. K. Kelappan Nair, then a teacher in St. Berchman's School, was its first President, Padmanabha Pillai the first Secretary, and P. N. Kesava Panikkar the first Treasurer. They aimed at inter-communal harmony, educational advancement and economic uplift. While the *Keraleeya Nair Samajam* had no full-time workers, the new *Sangha* was blessed with them. In 1915 provision was made for forty permanent members; the activities of the *Sangha* grew wider and soon embraced Kuttanad and the Southern areas of Trivandrum, Neyyattinkarai and Padmanabhapuram. On 11 July, 1915 the *Sangha* was renamed as the Nair Service Society.^{44c}

On Kelappan Nair's resignation, Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai⁴⁵ succeeded him as the President of the Nair

44c. It however was registered under the Travancore Company Regulation only on 30 June, 1925 as No. 12.

45. He was born in 1877 in Changanacherry Taluk. C. Krishna Pillai and other benefactors relieved him, as far as possible, of his financial stress in his early days. A lover of liberty, he had his own troubles with the authorities of the Maharaja's College, Trivandrum. He made his mark in the legal profession. He expressed his latent leadership when in 1905 there was an unfortunate communal strife in Central Travancore and successfully restored social harmony. He got another opportunity to secure communal harmony in Quilon in 1915 when he championed the cause of the down-trodden Pulaya community. He took part in the annual conference of the Indian National Congress held at Madras in 1909. This participation, of course, widened his outlook and enlarged the sphere of his activities and made him think of the interests of the country, rather than those of a small community. He grew into a "liberal level-headed and bold social reformer". He fought for the reform of the Legislative Assembly and for the attainment of responsible government in the State. At the time of the students' strike in 1921 he pleaded with the Dewan for the grant of a general amnesty to those students who had been subjected to disciplinary action. He actively worked for the success of the Satyagraha at Vaikom at the end of which he was commissioned by Gandhiji to work out strictly the terms of the truce. He was sympathetic to the cause of those who organised the Abstention Movement. As President of the *Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh*, he rendered substantial service. He was made President of the branch of Indian National Congress established at Trivandrum in 1938. He welded together the progressive forces of the land. He expired on 30 June, 1940. (See the Biography of Mr. Pillai by C. Narayana Pillai). As G. Ramachandran remarks, "His gospel of self-effacing constructive work, legal acumen and intensely practical ana-

Service Society on 1 January, 1916. He continued in that office for the next ten years and strengthened the Society. Its progress owed not a little to the work of P. K. Narayana Pillai^a also who organised the Social Reform League in Trivandrum, addressed several Nair conferences and wrote several articles on social reform in the monthly, the *Nair*. He advocated the total eradication of untouchability and visualised a Hindu society, free of caste differences. It was on his initiative that the Nair Service Society passed, at one of its conferences, a resolution in favour of temple entry for the depressed classes.

But the life breath of the Nair Service Society has been Mannath Padmanabha Pillai^b who, with untiring energy, missionary

lytical and concrete temperament won for him great reputation..... His political judgment was always realistic and his analysis of a given situation was precise and unperturbed by sentiment or prejudice..... He was at once the product of his times and the result of his own efforts".

Mr. Pillai, says O. M. Thomas, did not believe "in praying and fasting as an effective means of winning victories" and his methods were "the common place devices of the professional politicians of Europe or America. For he considers politics a game which has to be *played* and won.....He is too shrewd to champion a losing cause, however high and noble it may be..... (He) fails to loom larger than he does in popular imagination because of his compromising disposition. Although his intellectual powers are not brilliant, he is, no doubt, a clever man. He has an insight into men and things..... He wins battles; but he does not declare war". (*Under the knife*, pp. 58-67).

45a. He was born in March, 1878. After finishing his studies he started legal practice at the Alleppey Bar. He was the Chairman of the Reception Committee when the South Indian States Peoples' Conference met at Trivandrum in 1929. His speech on that occasion was a penetrative study of the general conditions in the Princely States and their relations with the Paramount Power. He served as Judge, of the High Court of Travancore for four years from 1929 and on retirement re-entered public life. His services to the State as a Legislator were considerable. As an erudite scholar he occupies a permanent place in the field of literary criticism in Malayalam. He expired on 10 February 1938. (For details see his biographical account by P. K. Parameswaran Nair).

45b. Mannath Padmanabha Pillai was born on 2 January, 1878. He imbibed the rudiments of knowledge in the conservative fashion but financial stress prevented him from prosecuting English studies. He became a teacher under the Government of Travancore in 1894 but resigned the office after ten years. He then practised as a Vakil in the Magistrate's Court, Changanacherry, but soon Kappana Kannan Menon diverted his attention to the field of social service.

zeal and unique organisational ability worked hard for the regeneration and solidarity of the Nair community. He gave up legal profession and on 25 August, 1915 solemnly dedicated himself as a life-long and full-time servant of the Society. From that time onwards he stamped the impress of his personality on Kerala as a great social reformer with advanced views. He had to deal with a number of communal problems including mal-administration of property on the part of the head of a Nair joint-family, quarrels and profitless litigation among the members of the community and the education and maintenance of the children of poor Nair widows.

Padmanabha Pillai concentrated on education. He was helped in his work by K. Paramu Pillai and P. K. Kesava Pillai. The Nair conference held at Muttar was a turning-point in his educational efforts. The first *bhoodan* or land-gift in Karukachal obtained by the Nair Service Society from Natamel Iravi Kurup and K. Narayanan Nair during 1919-20 was a great source of inspiration for future efforts. Padmanabha Pillai undertook extensive tours in different parts of Travancore to collect funds and organise and co-ordinate the activities of the *karayogams*^{45c}. He was able to establish a number of schools. He asked the Nair community not to succumb to the influence of orthodox priesthood but to cultivate self-reliance and self-respect and develop a spirit of social service. Beginning from a scratch, the Nair Service Society was able to acquire property worth about two lakhs of rupees during the first decade of its existence as a result of his efforts.

Padmanabha Pillai visualised a Hindu society, unified and free from caste distinctions. He worked for the uplift of the depressed classes and the eradication of untouchability. Hence his enthusiastic participation in the famous Vaikom Satyagraha. The Nair conference held at Vaikom during 1923-24 and the S.N.D.P. Conference convened there at the same time indicated the growing harmony between the two communities; there was also a joint Nair-Ezhava Conference held under the Presidentship of Changana-cherry K. Parameswaran Pillai. In his constructive work in early

45c. The *Karayogam* with adult men and women of the Nair community as members was the unit of organisation. The Taluk Union was formed by two representatives from each of the *karayogams*. After the Nair Service Society was registered, the *karayogam* came to be affiliated to it as their working as isolated groups was found to be ineffective. The Nair Service Society however did not interfere with their autonomy but acted only as a co-ordinating agency. At first the membership of the Society was restricted so as to make it an effective body. Later the rules of membership were well defined. During 1932-33 there were 628 members and during 1936-37, 1,075 members in the organisation.

days. Padmanabha Pillai was fortunate in getting the co-operation of M. Nilakandhan Nair of Kumarakam who had resigned his job as a teacher in Government service in order to be a dedicated servant of the Nair Service Society. A disarming orator, Mr. Nair was in charge of the Society's organisational wing. He edited the *Service*, a monthly published by the Society from 1920 onwards, and advocated individual partitioning of property and the adoption of the *Makkathayam system*.

Meanwhile the *Keraleeya Nair Samajam* had been internally divided⁴⁶ between those who demanded the retention of the *Marumakkathayam* system and those who advocated its abolition and individual partition of property. Its conference held at Trivandrum on 6 November 1915, was marred by personal bickerings, as a result of which its founder, C. Krishna Pillai, found himself excluded from it. C. V. Raman Pillai^{46a} and his supporters thereupon emerged dominant in that organisation. The conference held at Trichur also had been a colossal failure from the view-point of achievement. Another conference proposed to be held at Calicut did not materialise. Finally the Nair Service Society decided to hold a Nair Conference^{46b} under its own auspices at Changanacherry on 14 and 15 May, 1916. In order to avoid any possibility of conflict

46. Though the *Keraleeya Nair Samajam* had been holding conferences at different places including Trivandrum, it is doubtful if it could achieve anything concrete after the split.

46a. C. V. Raman Pillai was born at Trivandrum in 1858. In 1877 he joined the First Grade College in the city and took keen interest in extra-curricular activities. Remaining unnoticed, he used to publish articles on administration in Travancore. It is said that he had a hand in the drafting of the Malayali Memorial of 1891. He did much to sustain the popular agitation against the vagaries of administration. He was critical of the drastic punishment awarded to Swadeshabhimani K. Ramakrishna Pillai. He was personally attached to M. Krishnan Nair, when the latter was the Dewan of Travancore, and through the paper, the *Mithabhasi*, he supported his administration when it was being attacked by leaders like Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai. He demanded that only the sons of Travancore should be appointed as Dewans of the State. He was very much upset over the students' strike of 1922 which served only to intensify his hatred towards the administration of Raghaviah. A vigorous controversy raged over this issue in the press at the time. He was liberal in his religious outlook. His contribution to Malayalam literature has secured for him a permanent place in its history. He expired on 21 March, 1922.

46b. It was presided over by V. K. Sankara Menon, Judge of the Chief Court, Cochin.

with the *Keraleeya Nair Samajam*, it was decided at this conference to constitute a new organisation, the *Samastha Kerala Nair Maha Samajam* with C. Krishna Pillai as its President and Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai as its Secretary. It was also decided that there should be annual conference under its auspices.⁴⁷ This organisation had no definite programme of action and it had little organisational contact with the Nair Service Society. Practically the Nair Service Society now stepped into the shoes of both the *Keraleeya Nair Samajam* and the *Samastha Kerala Nair Maha Samajam* and continued its constructive activities. It held its own annual conferences at different places in Travancore to discuss and settle the programme of social work. T. P. Velukutty Menon^{48a} of Thattamangalam vigorously organised *karayogams* in several places. In spite of the opposition of the *Nair Maha Sabha* the Nair Service Society was able to register steady progress from strength to strength.

As regards Cochin, the *Cochin Nair Maha Samajam* had been registered as a public body. Its progress was however only moderate.^{47b} In Malabar on the initiative of K. Kelappan Nair a *Taluk Nair Samajam* had been started in Kurumbranad. Kappana Kannan Menon did some organisational work in Tellicherry. There was some activity also in Kollam, near Quilandy and Chingapuram.⁴⁸ On the whole during the period under review the Nair Service Society could not embrace Cochin and Malabar where the Nairs, inspired by the spirit of nationalism, appeared to be indifferent to the communal approach to social problems.

It was realised even in early days that educated women with progressive outlook in Travancore should form their own associations for general benefit and for the discussions of problems specially

47. Such conferences were subsequently held at Mannar, Ayirur, Maruthankuzhi, Vaikom, Trivandrum, Changanacherry, Mavelikkara and Kottayam. The Ayirur Conference made an attempt to effect a reconciliation with the *Keraleeya Nair Samajam*. Anyway since 1922-23 no Nair conference was held for some time.

47a. He expired during 1934-35.

47b. Among the various *karayogams* established in the Cochin State that of Ernakulam has been the most important. During 1950-51, the Cochin *Samajam* came to be absorbed by the Nair Service Society.

48. It would appear that in Malabar there was also an association called the *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* which was recognised by the Government. It consisted mostly of Lawyers of the Nair community. In course of time it ceased to exist. (The *Malayali* dated 27 March, 1912).

affecting them.⁴⁹ Several such associations were formed⁵⁰ which actively co-operated with the leading social reformers. They expressed themselves against polygamy and other prevalent social evils.

There was a time when it was thought that the marriages of the Nairs had no legal validity as they were followers of the *Marumakkathayam* system. P. Thanu Pillai, Chief Secretary to the Government of Travancore, introduced the Nair Marriage Regulation Bill in the Legislative Council in 1897 to find a solution to this problem but it was lost on account of conservative opposition.⁵¹ Several leaders subsequently represented that a *Marumakkathayam* Regulation should be passed and in response to their demand the Government appointed a committee⁵² to study the problem in all its aspects. They submitted their report in 1908 on the basis of which the Government drafted a Bill in 1911. Thus was passed the first Nair Regulation in 1913.⁵³

When P. Rajagopalachari was Dewan of Travancore, there was further agitation in favour of individual partition and the adoption of *Makkatayam*. There were of course some differences of opinion on the matter but the majority of the people were in favour of individual partition. K. P. Raman Pillai drafted a

49. The Nair women, as a rule, never used to attend public meetings and the presence of Mrs. P. Raman Thampi at a students' gathering in Quilon in October, 1901 earned much appreciative commend.

50. Such associations functioned at Calicut, Palghat, Cannanore, Vaikom, Thiruvalla, Chirayinkil, Neyyattinkarai and Nedumangad, apart from other places.

51. See *Ente jvita smaranakal* by Mannath Padmanabhan.

52. The Committee with Dewan Bahadur M. Govinda Pillai as its President included M. Krishna Pillai, K. Krishnan Pandalai, N. Raman Pillai and K. P. Padmanabha Menon. The majority recommended in favour of legal validity for the Nair marriages, control of joint family administration and partition of property.

53. The Nair members in the Legislature opposed the provision for partition, excluding which the Bill was passed into law.

Nair Bill⁵⁴ which, after a long process of debates and discussions, ultimately became law in 1925. It was the views of the Nair Service Society which were more or less reflected in the piece of new legislation. It codified and consolidated law and usages among the Nairs in respect of marriage, inheritance, succession, partition and management of family property.

In Cochin State also with the spread of modern education social ideas began to change in a revolutionary manner. Several customs had hardened themselves into tradition in the course of centuries. They were out of tune with the new ideas and ideals. Having outlived their usefulness they acted as a clog on social progress.

In 1916 the leading members of the Nair community in Cochin which 'both by reason of its past history and its present position has stamped its individuality on the west coast,' submitted a memorial signed by nearly 1000 persons to the Maharaja of Cochin for legislative enactment on matters affecting them in the light of the changed sentiments. The Government appointed a committee⁵⁵ to recommend changes on the basis of evidence to be collected and they submitted their report on 10 September, 1919. The Draft Bill was published to elicit public criticism and a conference convened by the Dewan at Ernakulam to discuss it. The Government decided to pass, on the model of similar Regulation in Travancore, the Nair Regulation into law which was put into effect from 5 June, 1920.

According to the new law the *Sambandham* of Nair women with men of the higher castes as well as the existing right of free divorce

54. In 1922 Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai had already drafted a Bill providing for individual partition, monogamy, and the right of wife to the self-acquired property of her husband. Raman Pillai's Bill also on the same lines, was however accepted officially and sent to the Select Committee. On Raman Pillai's demise, Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai piloted the Bill which, on account of its importance, had attracted wide attention. The Bill, after a lot of discussion, was passed with some amendments. It had been pointed out that the unrestricted right to demand partition would lead to the fragmentation of holdings or the frittering away of property but finally it was decided that the requirements of modern social development justified the acceptance of the new changes.

55. T. S. Narayana Iyer, Chief Justice, was the President of the committee while K. P. Padmanabha Menon, V. K. Sankara Menon, Ambat Kutlikrishna Menon and T. K. Krishna Menon were members and P. Damodara Menon, Secretary. The committee interviewed 314 witnesses and also got written replies from 104 gentlemen and 40 ladies. K. P. Padmanabha Menon did not live to see the successful termination of their labour.

came to be legally recognised;⁵⁶ a person entering into marital relations with a Nair women should observe monogamy; the right of the wife and children to maintenance as well as to the self-acquired property of husband and father respectively to the extent of a moiety was recognised; adoption in the absence of a female descendant was provided for; the powers of the *Karanavan* in the Nair family were curtailed⁵⁷ and the right of *thavazhi* (branch) partition was allowed.⁵⁸

(4) Christians:

The Christians constituted an important and powerful community in Travancore and had received several concessions and privileges from the rulers in the past. Pursuing agriculture, industry and trade they became materially prosperous. During the days of the *Malayali Memorial* they were on the side of the memorialists.

In May, 1905 the Catholics of Travancore and Cochin held a public meeting at Mannanam and started their own organisation, the *Catholic Mahajana Sabha* which was intended to cover British Malabar also.

At least from 1870 onwards complaints had been heard about the hardships experienced by the Christian community on account of the want of a well-defined law in regard to inheritance. The Christian members of the Popular Assembly were pressing for the appointment of a Commission to study the problem. The ecclesiastical heads also lent weight to the demand.

The *Christian Maha Jana Sabha* held meetings at Kottayam twice under the presidentship of E. J. John and Dr. Punnen respectively in 1911 to press on the Government the demands of the Christian community, including the abolition of child marriage and dowry system. In September, 1911 the Christian Commission was appointed. At its inaugural meeting on 16 September, P. Cherian, the Chairman of this Commission, pointed out that the

36. Within a week after marriage the couple or their guardians should inform the authorities of the alliance.

57. The *karanavan* or the head of the joint family would be entitled to one-fourth of the net income and should produce the accounts of the *tharavad* before the adult members.

58. It may be noted that the right of partition was extended only to *tavazhis* and not to individuals. The committee reported that a majority of the people were not yet ready to convert the *Marumakkatayam* family fully into a *Makkatayam* one. The grant of a moiety only of the self-acquired property to wife and child also was based on the same consideration.

Christian population was split up into various sections with no uniformity in regard to the rule of inheritance and with no well-defined law of intestate succession, except the principle of justice, equity and good conscience. The third conference of the *Mahajana Sabha* was held at Tiruvalla in 1913 and the fourth in 1915.

The Christian Succession Act II of 1092 (21 December 1916) was designed to consolidate and amend the rules applicable to intestate Succession among Indian Christians in Travancore and it was based on the recommendations made by the Christian Commission. A common law for the various sections of the Christian community was deemed expedient. The Bill was drafted more or less on the lines of the Indian Succession Act and the *Marumakkathayam* Christians were excluded from its ambit. The Government was also empowered to exempt, from the operation of the whole or any part of the Act, any individual or the members of any sect and if necessary, also to extend its operation to any individual or class.

As regards Cochin, in September, 1919 the Dewan appointed a committee to study the lines on which legislation should be effected to regulate the rights of inheritance and succession among the members of the Christian community. The committee submitted their report on 14 December, 1920. A copy of the Draft Regulation was sent to ascertain the views of the Government of Madras⁵⁹. The latter noted⁶⁰ that it varied in important particulars from the laws in force in Travancore on one side and in British India on the other. They desired that the Draft should be consistent with existing customs in Cochin in the matters covered by the Bill, for it was undesirable to make a new succession law merely on the basis of "theoretical discussion in a small committee."

The Government of Cochin observed that the variations were due to the peculiar conditions prevalent in the State and that they did not materially conflict with established custom or usage. Custom in the State was not at all uniform except with regard to the Tamil Christians of the Chittur Taluk who therefore would be exempted from the operation of the Regulation. On account of local variations caused by different levels of educational progress it was indeed difficult to secure uniformity in judicial decisions. It was only in matters in which the practice in Cochin varied from that in British and Travancore that the Government decided to be guided by enlightened public opinion; such variations were mostly in respect of women's right to a share in the property of the intestate. They

59. Dewan's letter No. 2205 dated 25 February, 1921.

60. Letter from the British Resident dated 20 August, 1921.

could be ascribed to the new social outlook resulting from the modern system of education that benefited the men and women of the community in Cochin.

Ultimately the Government of Madras communicated their approval⁶¹ of the Cochin Christian Succession Regulation which became law with effect from 15 December, 1921.

(5) *Pulayas*

The social condition of the Pulayas and the Pariahs in the latter part of the nineteenth century is certainly beyond the imagination of the present generation. Subject to predial slavery, they were formerly bought and sold by their lords. They had to discharge all the customary feudal obligations. As untouchables they must give way to the members of higher castes without polluting them. They were denied access to all public offices.

The *Malayala Manorama*, in its notable first editorial itself, had drawn the attention of its readers to the important problem of the education of the Pulayas.⁶² In 1911 we come across a decision made at the annual conference of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam* to educate a Pulaya youth upto the B.A. standard. Yet the society at large continued to remain apathetic on the whole.⁶³ Though V. Rama Iyengar, the Dewan of Travancore, had as early as 1884 announced that all public offices, roads and markets would be open to all subjects in the State, irrespective of caste or creed, little change was yet noticeable in the attitude of the *savarnas*. Later, Mr. P. Rajagopalachari the Dewan, repeated the announcement in 1908 for the information of the public.

T. Marthandan Thampi was a pioneer in the field of the uplift of the depressed classes in Travancore. He started the work

61. Letter R. O. P. No. 630/21 dated 18 October, 1921 from the British Resident.

61a. This paper was read by the aristocratic and conservative classes while not a single Pulaya could read it in those days. The leading article therefore could not have been pleasant to the former and it could not have been written merely to win over the latter. The paper took the right step in a just cause for the amelioration of the depressed classes. It condemned those who misappropriated the funds set apart by the Government for their education.

62. In 1911 there were 1589 Pulaya pupils but in 1912 only 1437 pupils and in 1913 only 1393 pupils. When on the recommendation of Dr. Mitchel, Director of Public Instruction, Pulaya pupils were admitted into the school at Venganur, in 1912 the *savarnas* of the locality objected to it and the Government decided to exclude them from it.

of organising the Pulaya community. He established a school for the Pulayas at Pattom in Trivandrum. The Pulayas were encouraged to give up drinking and take to industrial pursuits for their economic improvement.

During the Dewanship of Madhava Rao, the Government of Travancore nominated Ayyankali,⁶³ a leading member of the community, to the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. On account of the pressure systematically exerted by him the Government became increasingly aware of the grievances of the Pulayas which were removed gradually.

other Communities

Besides those mentioned above, other communities also began to organise themselves in Travancore for their own economic and social progress. Each community attempted a reform from within by working against the existence of sub-castes and the antiquated social observances and by encouraging education and the promotion

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63. He was born in September, 1864 in Perunkattuvila family at Venganur near Trivandrum. He learned Malayalam. He was fully conscious of the disabilities of his community to which even fundamental rights had been denied. He was inspired by the ideals of Sri Narayana Guru Dr. Palpu and Kumaran Asan. Within a period of five years he was able to organise the members of the Pulaya community in Neyyattinkarai Taluk and make them conscious of their place in society. There were fierce struggles which his followers had to face for the recognition of the civic right of the Pulayas in regard to freedom of movement along the public roads. The reactionaries created trouble at Chalia Teru near Balaramapuram, Manakad, Kazhakuttam and Kaniyapuram but Ayyankali was never disheartened in his efforts. In 1914 as a result of his earnest representations, the Dewan issued orders for the admission of the Pulaya children into schools. Under his inspiration the Pulaya women gave up their ornaments permitted by custom and this led to a clash with the reactionaries in Perinad in 1915. He organised *Sadhu Paripalana Sangham*, four years after the establishment of the S. N. D. P. *Yogam*, to fight against the reactionary traditions of society. As a member of the Popular Assembly, he sought the co-operation of all in eradicating the social evils. It was mainly as a result of his efforts and the annual conferences of the *Sangham* which he held that he was able to secure important concessions to the Pulayas. He realised his life's ambition when the Temple Entry Proclamation was issued. He expired at the ripe age of 77 on 18 June, 1941. No other social reformer in Kerala seems to have clashed so much with his surroundings as Ayyankali.

of material and cultural progress.⁶⁴ There were several communities, big and small, and the social reformers started their work on communal lines. Perhaps no other method seemed open to them in those days. The work in the direction of communal solidarity on progressive lines produced positive results though at a later stage unfortunately, the eagerness to enter public offices and representative institutions began to poison the atmosphere and breed communal antagonism. But this was a passing phase and communalism lost its sting when common political aspirations developed and when the democratic movement began for the realisation of complete responsible government in the State.

The different organisations worked on the idea that the door would be opened only to those who would knock. The floor of the Popular Assembly became the forum for the demand of progressive social legislation. As the number of qualified hands increased in each community⁶⁵ and as there were few openings for appointment other than State service in a purely agricultural area like Travancore, there was naturally a rush to secure places under the Government. They were regarded as the only means to improve the social status and political opportunity of each community. The demand was more than the supply and the only effective way to catch the attention of the Government was to make representations in the Popular Assembly for fair treatment to be meted out to every community. This fact is confirmed by a careful study of the matters brought before the Assembly⁶⁶.

64. *Samasta Vijnana Granthavali*, Vol. II by R. Easwara Pillai. There are references to Araya Conference, Kudumbi Association, Pisharodi Samajam, Muslim Service League, Variya Samajam, Vellala Mahasabha, Siva Durga Samajam, Paravar Mahajana Sabha, Kshatriya Samajam, Thandar Mahasabha, Parayar Mahasabha, Visvakarma Sanimelanam, Veerasaiva Sammelanani, Vela Mahajana Yogam and Adima Mahajana Sabha, besides many others.

65. In 1921 the Government of Travancore classified the population into Hindus with 39 sections, Muslims with 8 sections and Indian Christians with 15 sections (besides Anglo-Indians and Europeans and allied races). (See Travancore Government Gazette, January and February, Page 312).

66. Thus at the 22nd session of the Assembly, there were motions on the disabilities of Kanimala, Pariah, Pulaya, Ganaka, Nadar and other communities. (Gazette dated 9 February, 1926). At the subsequent sessions also we notice motions concerning communal representation in public services and the problem of untouchability. In general review we may state that from 1926 to 1930 communal claim was the chief topic for discussion. In 1931 however the list of subjects of discussion included representative government, ministerial responsibility and adult franchise. The

The Nanjanad Vellala Act of 1926 was modelled upon the Nair Act with modifications to suit the habits and customs of that community.⁶⁷

The position of the Kshatriyas and the small *Marumakkatayam* communities⁶⁸ continued to be anomalous although the progress of social ideas in other *Marumakkatayam* communities like the Nairs, the Ezhavas and the Vellalas had been recognised in proper Acts. However on 31 December, 1932 the Kshatriya Act was passed to regulate marriage, succession, partition and family management of the Malayala Kshatriyas, excluding the royal family, of the State of Travancore.

Act XI of 1108 (December, 1932) amended the law relating to inheritance and succession among the Muslims of Travancore.

Conclusion

The above review may give, it is hoped, some idea of the great advance recorded by the different communities in Kerala during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Superstitious practices and expensive social habits were given up by them and each community, hitherto divided into a variety of sub-sections, gained such an internal cohesion as never known before. The result of the reform movement came to be felt in every sphere of social life. It affected the joint family system, the system of inheritance, the institution of marriage, the practice of polygamy and polyandry, and slowly made untouchability and unapproachability things of the past. The different communities became receptive to modern ideas and conscious of their position in society. Each one of them, well-organised as it was, sought to protect its interests and assert its rights. This communal approach to problems in Travancore and Cochin was gradually to be widened and transformed into a national and political movement to achieve the goal of freedom and responsible government.

problem of communalism in Travancore had been stated to be a by-product of autocratic government, dominated by non-responsible dewans and supported by a powerful bureaucracy.

67. The Travancore Tamil *Sangham* had its first meeting in September, 1911 at Bhutapandi. The Tamil Vellalas were primarily confined to Thovala, Agasthisvaram and Shenkottah of Travancore State. A Committee including K. Narayana Menon, Dewan Peishkar, had been formed in 1910 to study the law of marriage and succession of the Vellalas.
68. On 21 September, 1939 an Act defined and amended the law relating to marriage, succession and partition among the members of the Krishnan Vakakkar Marumakkathaya community.

CHAPTER 36

PRESS IN KERALA

(A) Growth

A reference has already been made elsewhere to the rise of modern journalism in Kerala which gave an impetus to the growth of political consciousness in the early days. The press became an important medium through which the Western ideas of freedom and democracy began to permeate among the members of the middle class, and gradually among the masses. The new stir in the social political and economic life in India of the nineteenth century had been, to a great extent, the contribution of the press. The leaders of the national movement in the early days belonged to a particular cross-section of society and but for the existence of a strong and devoted press they could not have easily swayed the masses.

In this connection, a brief survey of the growth of journalism in Kerala may not be out of place. Though the printing press had been introduced into Kerala by foreign missionaries at the end of the sixteenth century, the first printed book in Malayalam was published only in 1772, the printing having been executed in Rome.¹ It would appear that the *Rajya Samacharam* published from June 1847 by the Basel Mission at Tellicherry was the first journalistic publication in Malayalam.² Herman Gundert, the great German scholar, seems to have been its virtual Editor.

Next came the *Paschimodayam*, a monthly, published by the Basel Mission at Tellicherry from October, 1847. It was intended to disseminate Western knowledge among the people of Kerala. Herman Gundert was evidently associated with this monthly also.

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1. Article by K. P. Kesava Menon in the *South Indian Journalist Annual*, 1953.
 2. Article by A. D. Hari Sarma in the *Kerala Dhwani*, Annual Supplement, 1960. A few copies of the *Rajyasamacharam* and the *Paschimodayam*, including the first issues are said to be kept by K. V. Vareed. A few scholars however are of the view that the *Gnananikshepam* published from the C. M. S. Press, Kottayam was the first journal in Malayalam. But in the first issue of the Malayalam Book Man, published in 1909, it has been officially stated that the *Gnananikshepam* was a newspaper published once in a month and that it was started only in 1848. There is no reason to disbelieve this official report.

Later, on the initiative of Kurien Writer of Kottayam the *Paschima Taraka* in Malayalam³ was published at Cochin in 1962-63. It continued to be published for some time and its office was later shifted to Trivandrum. In 1876-77 appeared the *Satyanada Kahalam*, edited first at Koonamavu and later at Varapuzha and Ernakulam; it was the predecessor of *Satyanadam* which came to be published as a weekly.⁴ In 1881 the *Kerala Mitram* began to be published at Cochin on the initiative of Devji Bhimji, a Gujarati merchant. C. Kunhirama Menon⁵ started the *Kerala Patrika* at Calicut about 1887 (1884). He was a "vigilant observer of public affairs", and a "vigorous critic of administrative vagaries". On 15 April, 1887 the *Nazrani Deepika* appeared and in course of time it became a daily with the title, *Deepika*, published from Kottayam.

In 1888 the *Malayala Manorama* Company was started at Kottayam as a limited concern by Kandathil Varghese Mappillai who, for some time, had been the Editor of *Keralamitram*. He knew what the public wanted and *Malayala Manorama* soon became the forum for literary enterprise. With its wide circulation and established reputation it soon came to the front rank in Malayalam journalism. On the demise of Varghese Mappillai, in 1904, K. C. Manamen Mappillai came to preside over the fortunes of the paper.

The newspapers at that time did not deal with problems of political interest so much as those of social or literary importance. It is in this connection that the martyrdom of *Swadesabhimani* Ramakrishna Pillai, already referred to, gathers its unique importance.

The *Kerala Sanchari* under the editorship of C. P. Govindan Nair and the *Manorama* which was the official organ of the *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* were published at Calicut about this time; they exercised considerable influence. A. Balakrishna Pillai made his own forceful contribution to journalism and literary criticism through the *Samadarsi* and the *Kesari*. The *Malayali* entered the

3. K. C. Manamen Mappillai's article in *S. N. D. P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 1953.

4. C. Varkey served as its Editor for about 48 years.

5. The newspaper, says K. P. Kesava Menon, set an illustrious example to other newspapers of the day and some of its contributors were a terror to "corrupt and inefficient officials" in those days. On Kunhirama Menon's death it gradually lost its vigour and importance.

6. This body represented the landed aristocracy and the lawyers of Malabar who often made representations to the Government on Public affairs.

journalistic field at Quilon and one of its Editors, M. R. Madhava Warriar, was noted for his impartial and fearless criticism and independent outlook. The paper subsequently was shifted to Trivandrum.

Some papers carried on a relentless struggle against contemporary social injustice and oppression. T. K. Madhavan, Editor of the *Desabhimani* and a brave patriot and idealist, created a sense of unity and self-respect among the depressed classes who were inspired to stand up for their rights. K. Ayyappan through the *Sahodaran* in Cochin, and C. Krishnan, through the *Mitavadi* at Calicut, appealed to the conscience of the higher castes in their campaign against social injustice. Murkoth Kumaran, Editor of the *Gajakesari* was an elegant writer and critic. Several thought-provoking articles on social reform used to appear in the *Vivekodayam*, published by the famous poet, N. Kumaran Asan.

There were also English newspapers like the *Cochin Argus* in Cochin, the *Daily News* at Kottayam, the *Western Star* at Cochin (which was the English counterpart of the *Paschimataraka* and others.

With the dawn of the Gandhian era in Indian politics a new set of newspapers appeared "specially devoted to the cause of Indian freedom". The *Mathrubhumi* was started at Calicut in 1923 as a "national paper" and an "instrument of national thought and of social will". It retained its independence as a staunch sponsor of public interest and national cause. P. Ramunni Menon, K. Madhavan Nair, P. Achuthan, K. Madhava Menon, K. P. Kesava Menon, T. V. Sundara Iyer and Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad were among the great stalwarts who, sacrificing the comforts of life, took up public and political work and founded the *Mathrubhumi*. The young and active leader K. P. Kesava Menon and the great nationalist, P. Ramunni Menon, quietly built up its traditions. The *Swarat* started at Quilon in 1922 and edited by A. K. Pillai who, on return from Oxford plunged into the freedom struggle, had indeed a glorious, though unfortunately short, career. The *Al Ameen* at Calicut, edited by the great patriot, Muhammad Abdur Rahman, also strove for national freedom. M. Ramunni Nair under the pen name *Sanjayan* upheld Gandhian ideals and brought out the political idiosyncrasies of his time through the *Kerala Patrika*, the *Mathrubhumi* and the *Sanjayan* and the *Visvarupam* which he edited. The *Malayala Rajyam*, started at Quilon during the early days of active political movement, had its first Editor in C. V. Kunjuraman, a man of deep enlightenment and

7. Article on the *Growth of Malayalam Journalism* by K. P. Kesava Menon.

forceful logic. Later he accepted the editorship of the *Kerala Kaumudi* at Trivandrum. The *Gomathi* and the *Deepam* came to be published from Trichur.

With the rapid growth of political consciousness and the emergence of new political parties several other newspapers too sprang into life from time to time. Some of them worked for the social benefit and enlightenment of particular communities while others were of purely literary interest. It is not possible to enumerate here the names of all the newspapers and journals in Malayalam; only a few have been referred to above.

(B) Relations with the Government

An autocratic cast of mind was the characteristic feature of the British bureaucracy and the sense of infallibility that it cherished led to its resentment of public criticism. Even liberal-minded men like Munro and Elphinstone could not rise above the notions of the age to which they belonged. The officers who were appointed as Dewans in the States looked upon themselves as the agents of the Paramount Power rather than as the servants of the people.

The struggle for the freedom of the press in British India was conducted by the British Editors who attacked the vagaries of the authorities in the local English papers. In Kerala also it was the English missionaries who started through the Madras papers their criticism of administration. The Malayalam newspapers in Travancore and Cochin were, as a rule, steeped in the sentiment of loyalty to royalty.

Some of the newspapers in Kerala boldly criticised individuals and the general administration. Sankunni Menon, the Dewan of Cochin, was constantly subjected to attacks by the local paper, the *Western Star*. On 29 May 1868, Walker, its Editor got a thrashing from Captain Winckler who had been offended by him. The outstanding instance of attack on the Dewan and administration, and incidentally on the Royal Family in Travancore, was that of *Swadesabhimani* K. Ramakrishna Pillai. The *Indian Patriot*, edited at Madras by C. Karunakara Menon, subsequently charged Mr. Pillai in September and October, 1910 for having published seditious, disloyal and contemptuous statements against the

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8. Commenting on the Ashe murder case, the *Malayali* on 15th July, 1911 stated that loyal Travancoreans could not but regret the foul murder of the British officer and that they hated all secret and seditious associations. The same paper on 26 July, 1913, expressed the view that the Government should not pass any Press Law but put its confidence in the people who would discourage the unsatisfactory tone of the newspapers. In Cochin also similar ideas prevailed.

Government of Travancore, and spread disaffection among the subjects of the State.

At first there was no law to regulate the establishment and working of private printing press in Travancore. In 1898 Raman Unnithan who worked a press at Tangasseri applied to the Dewan for permission to establish a press at Quilon. For the first time, the Government, on that occasion, insisted that certain conditions prescribed by the British Indian Act XXV of 1867 regulating printing presses should be satisfied.

Then a legislative measure prescribing a uniform procedure for the regulation of printing presses was introduced on 13 December, 1903 by Regulation II of 1079 (M. E.). None was to keep in his possession any press for the printing of books or newspapers who had not made the necessary declaration before the District Magistrate in regard to the names of the printer, press and the places of its location. No newspaper was to be circulated except in conformity with the Regulation. No books or newspapers could be sent by *Anchal service* when they contained words, marks or designs of an obscene, or seditious or grossly offensive character; such books or newspapers might be detained under the authority of the Dewan. The offenders in this respect were punishable with a fine not exceeding Rs. 1,000 or simple imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or both. This piece of legislation was at that time criticised as curtailing the liberty of both the press and the public.

In British India, as early as 1878, the Vernacular Press Act had been passed mainly to suppress 'seditious' articles, extolling Russia and deprecating England. Its objective of prevention rather than punishment was sought to be attained through the requisition of security bonds under regulated conditions. This Act was repealed in 1882 and reliance placed on an amended section (124 A) of the Penal Code which provided for penalty for 'seditious' writing. Subsequently the political murders suspected to have been instigated by newspaper articles, made the Government of India pass the Restrictive Press Act in 1908. The period, 1908-10 was indeed one of exciting events. In Bengal the cult of the bomb was popular; at Allahabad, Satyanarayan, Editor of the *Hindu Swaraj* was arrested for disloyalty; at Poona, the paper '*Kal*' was charged with sedition; at Bezwada, Narayana Rao, proprietor of the *Swaraj*, a Telugu paper, was arrested and his press confiscated; at Masulipatam, G. Harisarvothama Rao was arrested on a charge of disloyalty to the Government; Chidambaran Pillai and Subramania Siva of Tirunelveli also were arrested by the Government; action was taken against Lala Lajpat Rai and Bal Gangadhar Tilak and other leaders. As a result of disturbed conditions in general a

stringent Press Act was passed in 1910. With the out-break of the First World War the press legislation became extremely rigid⁹.

Early in the twentieth century several factors combined as a result of which the press in Kerala began to cast away its uncritical and loyalist attitude. It ceased to accept without question everything that came from above. The news of the victory of Japan over Russia, the agitation led by Tilak and other leaders, the murder of Europeans, the outcry against the partition of Bengal, the *Swadeshi* movement and the boycott of British goods and the establishment of national schools brought about a revolutionary change of ideas. The *Sandhya* and the *Yugantar* exercised not a little influence on the newspapers in Kerala. The Home Rule Movement, the non-cooperation Movement and the Malabar rebellion made a deep impression on the popular mind in Travancore and created a genuine, though vague, desire for responsible government in the State. There was a sudden out-burst of literary effort and a number of newspapers came to be started to champion the cause of freedom.¹⁰ It may be

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9. In 1914 on the basis of a communication from the British Resident, the Government of Travancore prohibited the bringing by sea or land into Travancore, of the pamphlet entitled *Gadr de Gunj* (Echo of Mutiny) published in Gurmukhi or in any other Indian language by the *Yugantar Ashram*, San Francisco. (File No. 278/1914. Letter from Mr. A. T. Forbes dated 7-7-1914 to the Dewan and the Dewan's notification No. S. R. 1586 dated 9-8-1914). Similarly the bringing of the *Hindustanee*, the official organ of the United India League, published in British Columbia also was prohibited. (Dewan's notification, No. S. R. 1585 dated 9 August, 1914).
 10. At Trivandrum there were the *Samadarsi*, the *Malabar Advocate*, the *Standard*, the *Trivandrum Daily News*, the *Sudarsanam*, the *Citizen*, the *Kerala Deepam* and the *Jannabhumi*. At Quilon the newspapers were the *Desabhimani*, the *Prabhata Taraka*, the *Sree Vazhumcode*, the *Malayali*, the *Kerala Chandrika*, the *Swarat*, the *Yuvakeralam*, the *Veerakeralam*, the *Kerala Kaumudi* the *Anritha Bharati* and the *Swadesabhimani*. At Kottayam were published the *Malayala Manorama*, the *Nazrani Deepika* and the *Jannarajini*. The *Travancore Times* and the *Sambavar Nesan* were published at Nagercoil. Other newspapers were the *Keralabhimani* at Mavelikara, the *Navabharathi* at Tiruvalla, the *Pouran* at Kayamkulam and the *Keralam* at Paravur. The *Mathrubhumi* was founded at Calicut on 18 March, 1923. It started as a tri-weekly but was later converted into a daily on 6 April, 1930. K. P. Kesava Menon, Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, K. Madhavan Nair, P. Achuthan, P. Ramunni Menon, K. Madhava Menon, T. V. Sudara Iyer and A. Karunakara Menon were a few of the leaders who were actively associated with it. In Cochin also there were papers championing the cause of nationalism (See the confidential report from the English Records Trivandrum, containing a list of 30 papers examined by the Head Translator to the Government during the year 1923). Some of the newspapers had become extinct while the offices of some others were shifted elsewhere.

stated that long before the political union of the three units of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, there was already a union of the hearts and aspirations of the people of Kerala during this period.

Travancore

A perusal of the articles which appeared in the newspapers of Travancore at the time would reveal that political dissatisfaction gripped the people. They advocated the ending of the autocratic rule of the Dewan, the establishment of responsible government, the adoption of an economic policy free from British control and the revision of the old treaty concluded by Travancore with the Paramount Power. The deportation, in 1910, of K. Ramakrishna Pillai, the students' strike of 1921 and the unsatisfactory constitutional reforms effected by Raghaviah were utilised by several papers as rallying points to awaken political or national consciousness. There was general dissatisfaction with the judicial system. A feeling existed that fair justice was not obtainable in civil or criminal cases in which Europeans were involved in as much as the officers of the State were not bold enough to go against the latter who were strongly supported by the Paramount Power.

In 1908 there was a suggestion that Travancore needed a new Press Law more or less on the lines of similar legislation effected on the initiative of the Dewan, V. P. Madhava Rao, in Mysore. But it was pointed out that in the field of journalism, Travancore, with more than twenty newspapers in English and Malayalam, had already recorded considerable progress and so there was no need for any legislation which would only arrest the growth of healthy public opinion in the State.

In April, 1911, P. Rajagopalachari reported that in the absence of regular book markets in the State it was not easy to find out what kind of literature usually found favour with the public but he hardly thought that books brought from outside were marked by 'seditious' tendency.¹¹ He further reported that the Malayalam press made the *Durbar* and individual officers its primary target of attack and that the press, otherwise, had little political colour. The Indian Press Act (I of 1910) had no effect on Travancore so far as it was not law in the State. The newspapers, most of which came into existence during the time of Sri Mulam Thirunal Maharaja, were not in general publishing articles that might arouse 'seditious' tendencies or caste disaffection.

On 31 October, 1917, the Press Regulation of December 1903 was amended. The printer of every newspaper in Travancore was

11. File No. 368. The Dewan's letter to Mr. Forbes dated 4 April 1911.

to deliver to an officer authorised by the Dewan two copies of each issue of such paper immediately after its publication; in this connection, any negligent printer was punishable with fine upto Rs. 50 for every case of default.¹²

In 1921 the Government authorised the prosecution of the Editor and the proprietor of the newspaper, *Veera Keralam* of Quilon under section 117 of the Travancore Penal Code in respect of an article published in it.¹³ There were charges also against the '*Muslim*' of Alleppey which on 15 October, 1923 published some verses, written by Otuvil Sankarankutty Menon and extracted from the '*Shu-Shul-Islam*.' The verses were a call to the nation to stand united against foreign rule. It was, however, found that though the writing was "reprehensible", it could not be considered penal.¹⁴ Another instance in which a newspaper was believed to have gone beyond the limits of propriety was when the *Janmabhumi* of Trivandrum published on 23 July, 1924 an article considered defamatory to Mr. Van Ross, Commissioner of Excise. The Dewan was of the view that the newspaper, started in September 1922, had no standing and its prosecution would only give it a prominence that it did not deserve.¹⁵ The *Samadarsi* of Trivandrum published two leading articles on 26 June and 1 July 1924, which were severely critical

12. Travancore Acts and Proclamations, Vol.II, Page 1625.

13. The Editor was K. Raman Menon of Malabar, a resident of Quilon and the proprietor Madhava Kurup Narayana Pillai. (File No. 569, Order No. J. 3150 dated 15 November 1921). Other papers suspected by the authorities to have spread sedition and "class hatred amongst the various communities" were the *Subhashini* and *Kerala Chandrika* (Letter from R. Ananda Rao, Head Sirkar Vakil to the Chief Secretary to the Government, dated, 26th October, 1921).

14. From Raghaviah to Cotton dated 9 February, 1924.

15. Letter from the Dewan to Cotton, No. 17/C, dated 9-10-1924.

On 28 November 1925 the *Janmabhumi* published another article which was considered to have offended section 145 A. of the Travancore Penal Code. The Division First Class Magistrate of Trivandrum sentenced the Editor, printer and publisher of this weekly newspaper to undergo rigorous imprisonment for one year and to pay a fine of Rs 250 and in default to undergo a further term of three months' rigorous imprisonment. On appeal the Session Judge of Trivandrum affirmed the conviction though he slightly modified the sentence. The revision petition was dismissed by the High Court who upheld the lower court's Judgement. (Proceedings of the High Court of Travancore, dated 5 July, 1926).

of the Government's repressive policy towards the Satyagrahis at Vaikom.¹⁶ Such articles caused a lot of irritation to the Government.

In 1925 the Government proposed to enact a new Regulation for controlling the press. The Government thought that there was little possibility of any such restrictive Bill being passed by the Legislative Council as then constituted; and even if it were to come before that body it might drag on and be tinkered with. Much could not be expected from the non-official Members of the Council who would not be spared by an uncontrolled press or by 'indisciplined constituencies' in case they threw in their lot with the authorities in the matter of press control. Secondly, the Government was anxious to make the new legislation operative immediately as any loss of time, in their view, would only "work the country up into a frenzy of sustained excitement".¹⁷ The demand for newspapers was keen in the State, according to the Dewan, Mr. Watts, because the masses enjoyed a good deal of leisure on account of the fertility of the country. With the vast strides taken by the State in primary and secondary education, every school master had practically become "the centre of a political group". There were at the time no less than 10 newspapers in the State among which the vernacular newspapers, according to the Dewan, showed a "spirit of indiscipline". The Nair Regulation had already broken up the old *tharavads* and dispersed family property; the Nairs who thought that they had a prescriptive right to Government employment found that they were being shouldered out of the secure official fastnesses held by them,

16. Confidential. No. 27 of 1924. The paper stated that the heart of the callous Government was shrinking like the pupil of the eye, in proportion to the light that would enter it. The Government was charged with having connived at the atrocities committed by the Caste Hindus and rowdies who broke the ribs of the Satyagrahis, assaulted them on their heads and chests and put out their eyes by smearing them with lime. The Government, said the paper, crushed fundamental rights by deporting those who pointed out the defects of administration and prohibiting public meetings; they did not interfere when the volunteers were obstructed by rowdies on a road, admittedly accessible to all, at Vaikom.

17. From Watts to Cotton, dated 2 December, 1925.

The Maharani Regent summoned from England Mr. Maurice Watts, whose forefathers had settled in Travancore for generations and who himself had spent his early years in the State, and appointed him as the Dewan (File No. 687. *The Evening News of India* 22-6-1926). It was reported that the new Regulation was intended to prevent the newspapers from criticising the Maharani Regent's husband, alleged to be the virtual Ruler of Travancore. (Report of the Travancore Political Conference held in August, 1926).

by the newly emerging, powerful, and politically conscious Christian community as well as by the class of untouchables, stimulated and agitated by influences from outside the State. At such a time when the different communities began to struggle, tooth and claw, for scraps of offices, a general deterioration in the efficiency of the public services, on account of various causes, was inevitably perceptible. The dissatisfaction with officialdom naturally led to the criticism of officers and the Dewan felt that the peculiar situation gave rise to a class of vernacular newspapers and Editors who would exult in stirring up and feeding numerous "conflicting interests, rivalries, struggles and animosities" and dishing up "scurrility, obscenity, vilification, vituperation". He desired to take some steps so that the mentality of the rising generation must not be warped and it appeared to him that an era of terrorism had come into being by a system of blackmail which the newspapers enforced on the officials. Some of them, he said, had started a "course of the foulest abuse based on utter falsehood", as they were "safe in the knowledge that the personages maligned cannot stoop to retaliation". The Dewan envisaged a step that would be a "speedy application of an effective brake upon a newspaper that exceeds the limits" and that in reality would be "a weak and mild measure". His idea was to cancel the licence of an "erring newspaper" and at the same time give it the privilege of having the merits of its case adjudged by a Full Bench of the High Court.

The new Regulation was passed by the Maharani Regent on 22 May, 1926 to bring the newspapers in Travancore under better control. The publication of any newspaper without a licence granted by the Government was made illegal; the application was to be made in such form and manner as might be prescribed by rules framed by the Government from time to time. Should any licensed newspaper contain anything that would directly or indirectly excite excessive disaffection against the Government or the Ruling Family of Travancore or the Paramount Power, promote feelings of hatred among the several classes of people, publish matter punishable under section 503 of the Travancore Penal Code or habitually disseminate false information, the Government could, with or without warning, cancel the licence granted and declare the licence fee forfeited. Any Magistrate might, by warrant, authorise any police officer, not below the rank of an Inspector, to enter the premises and search for the offensive copies of the newspaper. Any person in possession of any issue of a newspaper declared to be forfeited must surrender it within five days of his possession of it to the nearest police officer as otherwise he would be punishable with fine not exceeding Rs. 50 in respect of each copy of such issue of the newspaper in his possession. Provision was made for the order of the Government being revised by a Full Bench of the High Court.

The Press Regulation of 1926 was a highly controversial piece of legislation. Vigorous protest was made against it in the press, on the public platform and on the floor of the legislature. It was pointed out that the new Regulation placed the press completely at the mercy of an autocratic Executive and destroyed the most important safeguard that the public had against the high-handedness of the bureaucracy. Apparently there was no unusual circumstance that would have warranted such legislation; for in Travancore the press had had a fair standard of loyalty and one or two papers that had transgressed their limits had been brought to book. Objection was taken to the autocratic manner in which the legislation was effected. It was hatched in secret, passed outside the Legislature and thrown on the people as a surprise and to what extent it was considered derogatory to the dignity of the Legislature. It was further argued that there was no pressing need for such a measure so far as the provisions of Criminal Procedure Code or Penal Code were not shown to be insufficient to deal with an offending press. While the rest of India concentrated on schemes of self-government and popular rights, the people of Travancore, it was pointed out, were being obliged to extricate themselves from the doings of a reactionary Government.

In the Legislative Council, K. P. Nilakanta Pillai moved the resolution that the new Regulation should be repealed forthwith. He argued that it was more reactionary than either the Mysore Newspaper Regulation of 1908 or the Indian Press Act of 1910, that it took away a man's right to be heard and to let in evidence and that its basic principle was that punishment would come first and enquiry afterwards. No suspected offender would be morally affected if he were to be punished without an opportunity to vindicate himself before a court of law.¹⁸

K. George, Chief Secretary to the Government, stated in the Council that it was not callousness or indifference or the desire for autocratic power which actuated the Government, in the promulgation of the Press Regulation but only the necessity to curb the half educated young journalists who pandered to a vitiated taste for sensationalism and blackmailing.

18. According to Bradley, punishment is punishment only where it is deserved. One pays the penalty, for one owes it and for no other reason, and if punishment is inflicted for any other reason, it is a "gross immorality a crying injustice and abominable crime". Mr. Pillai quoted Bradley and Van Bar in the course of his speech in the Council. He accused the Government of treating different Editors differently and emphasised the importance of a free press.

The resolution, when put to vote, was lost, nineteen Members voting for and twenty-six voting against it.¹⁹

A public meeting was organised in Tambanur Hall, Trivandrum, on 28 May 1926 to concert measures for getting the new Press Regulation repealed. Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai who presided over it regretted that the measure should have been promulgated over the head of the Legislative Council. A resolution was passed demanding its repeal as it prejudicially affected the elementary right of freedom of expression and enabled every newspaper Editor to be punished by the Executive without resort to a court of law.²⁰ A second resolution²¹ that was passed called upon the members of the Legislative Council to take steps for the repeal of the Regulation by bringing in adjournment motion at its next session or refusing to consider the budget until the redress of the grievances of the press. By a third resolution it was decided to constitute a committee to do propaganda for repeal of the Regulation.²² The citizens decided

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19. In the first discussion of the subject in the Legislative Council only five non-official Members supported the adjournment motion proposed by C. P. Tharakan for stopping the proceedings to consider the Press Regulation. (*Kottayam Patrika*, 5 September 1926. File No. 860 of 1926).
 20. The resolution was moved by P. K. Narayana Pillai who stated that the new Regulation went far ahead of the Press Act I of 1910 in British India which was later repealed under pressure. The clauses regarding the publication of defamatory matter and false news were absent in the British Indian Press Act. Their inclusion was interpreted as the Government's attempt to protect the erring officials and proceed against any paper at any time even on flimsy grounds. Mr. Pillai added that clauses 7 and 8 of the Regulation relating to the forfeiture of the condemned papers were dangerous weapons in the hands of an autocratic Government. It was improper that the prosecutor himself would be the judge and that the powers given to the High Court were not adequate to ensure public safety. The Regulation, he contended, deprived the people of a chance to express their views on public matters and expose the vagaries of officials (letter to the Commissioner of Police, dated 29 May, 1926. File No. 664 of 1926).
 21. This was moved by A. Narayana Pillai and supported by P. K. Govinda Pillai and A. Thanu Pillai.
 22. The Committee was to consist of P. K. Narayana Pillai, A. K. Pillai, A. Balakrishna Pillai, V. Achutha Menon, A. Thanu Pillai and R. Ramalinga Iyer. This resolution was moved by Malloor K. Govinda Pillai and seconded by M. N. Pillai. It was pointed out that Malloor Govinda Pillai who was senior Professor, Government Law College, Trivandrum should not have attended the political meeting. Mr. Pillai explained that such Professors had only non-official status, which fact was recognised by the Government on several occasions in the past. Some of them had been made

at the meeting to start an agitation immediately for the establishment of responsible government in the State to prevent the passing of similar reactionary legislation in future.²³

Some members of the Legislative Council thought in terms of submitting a memorial to the Viceroy.²⁴ When the Travancore Political Conference met at Trivandrum in August 1926, a resolution condemning the Press Regulation and the unconstitutional manner

non-official Members of the Legislative Council and also allowed to become Members of the Popular Assembly. They had participated in political meetings as well in the past. An opinion was expressed that such a privilege enjoyed by the Professors of Law College should be revoked (File No. 665/1926).

23. This resolution was moved by A. K. Pillai and supported by K. P. Nilakanta Pillai, K. G. Kunjukrishna Pillai and P. K. Nair.
24. At about this time a resolution had been passed in the Imperial Legislative Assembly empowering the Government to confiscate newspapers and other publications which were suspected to be violating section 153 of the Indian Penal Code. Great leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Jinnah had taken part in the discussion over the Bill. Under such circumstances it was improbable that the Imperial Government would accede to the demands made in the memorial (*Kottayam Patrika* dated 5th September, 1926). The *Malayali* dated 23 July, 1926 commented that it was improper to complain to a foreign Government about the administration of Travancore. No leader in the past had ever sought any interference from outside. It was pointed out that the proper course would have been to seek redress from the Maharani Regent herself. An appeal to the Imperial Government on the part of the advocates of the freedom of the press was inconsistent to some extent, with their own demand made some time earlier that the Maharani Regent's powers should not be curtailed by the formation of a consultative body called the Regency Council.

The *Samadarsi* on 17 July, 1926 wrote that if all appeals at home failed it would not be improper to approach the Imperial Government for the remedy of grievances, because, according to the terms of the old treaty, the Government of Travancore was obliged to accept the advice of Imperial Government on all matters. The State had a share in the defence of India and could not enter into any transaction with a foreign power without the consent of the British. The passing of laws and the appointments to posts under the Government carrying a salary of Rs. 500 and above must have the approval of the British to whom the copies of judgments given by the High Court should also be sent. If an appeal to the British Indian Government was not desirable, the paper added, there should be responsible government in the State for the establishment of which also their consent might be required.

in which it was put into effect was passed.²⁵ It was resolved by a majority in the Subjects Committee of the Political Conference to memorialise the British authorities to give proper advice to the Maharani Regent, but the proposition was defeated in the general conference.²⁶

On 29 June, 1926, the *Navasakti* published an article which was severely critical of Mr. Watts, the Dewan.²⁷ The Government considered it as highly objectionable in tone and substance and as contravening the provisions of the Regulation of 1926. They felt that they could have cancelled the licence of the newspaper without notice but stated that they were prepared to give its management an opportunity to express unreserved regret. The leaderette subsequently published was not considered as sufficiently reflecting a repentant attitude. The licence of the *Navasakti* was therefore canceled.

During the year, 1925-26, fifty-seven newspapers and eighty-nine periodicals were published in the State. Next year there were forty-four newspapers and fifty-six periodicals in total. The newspapers in general dealt with political matters. During the same year, fifty-one new licences were issued to newspapers under the Regulation of 1926. Seven licences were cancelled. At the end of the year the total number of newspapers and periodicals was 120. During 1927-28, thirty-five new licences were issued.²⁸

25. It was moved by P. K. Narayana Pillai and supported by S. K. Nair.

26. At the general conference it was moved by Mr. E. V. Krishna Pillai, Editor of the *Malayali*. Itticheria, Chairman of the Reception Committee, Mannath Padmanabha Pillai and S. K. Nair supported it. They argued that in times of commotion and mal-administration the British Government was bound to give proper advice. But A. K. Pillai and the young men of the Congress camp opposed the proposition on the ground that the British Government was a foreign Government exploiting India. P. K. Narayana Pillai who was President, Press Law Repeal Committee, brought an amendment to postpone it for six months. Finally the amendment was withdrawn and the proposition defeated. Itticheria resigned his place in the Committee in protest (C. No. 693). See the *Hindu*, 18 August, 1926.

27. File No. 666 of 1926. After the promulgation of the Regulation of 1926 Mr. Watts had gone home on a short visit and this article was written when it was rumoured that he would be coming back. The paper characterised him as an inefficient administrator who could not distinguish between good and bad. The paper alleged that he did not do anything good for the State during the ten months of his administration and accused him of disrespectful attitude to the Legislature, partiality in appointments and gross official irregularity.

28. Administration Reports of 1925-26, 1926-27 and 1927-28.

On 12 September, 1930 the Travancore Press (Emergency powers) Act²⁹ was passed. According to it any one keeping a printing press, required a declaration under the Press Regulation of 1903, might be asked by a Magistrate to deposit as security amount, not more than Rs. 1,000. If any printing press for which security was not insisted on were to print and publish objectionable material the Government might compel its owner to deposit an amount, not less than Rs. 500 or more than Rs. 2000. The Government retained the power to forfeit the security or the press itself in case of incitement to or approval of any violent offence, seduction of any military officer, attempt to bring the Executive or the Judiciary into contempt and encouragement of non-payment of the amounts due to the Government. After the forfeiture of the security, any person making a fresh declaration should deposit an amount, not less than Rs. 1,000 or more than Rs. 5000. The Government could issue search warrants and forfeit the security, publication and the press itself if it was being kept without making any deposit. No unauthorised newspaper was to be transmitted by arial service.

A motion against the new press legislation was initiated in the Legislative Council but it was lost when put to vote.³⁰

In 1930 an article entitled 'Travancore and the Independence Movement' was published in the *Sentinel*³¹ and it was considered as offending the Regulation of 1926. In the same year, two articles under the headings *Heaven or Hell* and *Regency Administration* were published in the *Prabodhakan*. The Agent to the Governor-General,

29. The Newspapers in the State made adverse comments on this Regulation, except four including the *Malabar Advocate*, the *Trivandrum Express* and the *Western Star*.

30. Fourteen Members voted for it and thirty against it.

31. The article was published on 19 February, 1930. It was stated therein that little purpose would be served by the participation of the citizens of Travancore in the freedom struggle in British India but their energies must be directed towards the securing of fuller freedom from their own Government. It was added that national consciousness was impossible in India with its own diverse races and creeds; that Travancore should aim at freedom from British India, though it might be allied to the latter by friendly treaties. Travancore might have to allow the exploitation of her material resources by those from other parts of India but such a sacrifice was worth making for the escape from autocracy in the State subsisting on the Paramount Power.

Mr. N. L. Cater, considered the latter paper mischievous in its implications. The licence for the publication of both the newspapers was cancelled with effect from 11 September, 1930.³²

While the licence of the *Sentinel* and the *Prabodhakan* was cancelled without any warning, the Government subsequently warned the *Pouraprabha* of Kottayam and the *Bhaje Bharatam* for having published articles deemed offensive.³³ The first apologised but stopped publication and the second was not in a mood to submit. A similar warning was extended to the *Pratidinam* also which had published certain portions of a poem directed against the British Government. It was pointed out that during the administration of the Dewan, Raghavaiah, the newspapers in Travancore had been publishing articles highly critical of British policy and yet no action was taken. Some papers doubted whether V. S. Subramania Iyer, the new Dewan, was suppressing the press to earn the sympathy of the British.

In December, 1930, Lt. Col. H. R. Pritchard, Political Agent, drew the attention of the Dewan to the publication of *Songs of Freedom* in certain issues of the *Malayala Rajyam*.³⁴ The Government

32. Letters from Cater to the Dewan dated 15 August and 18 September, 1930 (C. No. 730) and the Dewan's reply dated 13 September, 1930, and the Press Note dated 23 September 1930 issued by the Chief Secretary to the Government. The article published on 6 August, 1930 stated that correspondence was going on between the Government of India and the Government of Travancore in regard to the extension of the Regency. Cater in his letter said that there was no such correspondence at all on the subject since January, 1930 when the Government of India's decision to terminate the Regency in August 1932 and invest the young Prince with ruling powers had been conveyed. The Dewan felt that the issue of a press note would be welcome to clarify the position and put an end to the mischievous rumours current in the State.

33. One of the charges against the *Bhaje Bharatam* was that it published the Congress Bulletin even though it had not been prohibited in Travancore (File No. 725/1930). On 11 and 18 July, 1930 the *Pouraprabha* had made comments on the Viceroy's announcement in the Indian Legislative Assembly made on 9 July, characterising him as a 'buffoon' and republished the Bombay Congress Bulletin dated 21 June, 1930, a proscribed publication in British India (Letter from the Chief Secretary to the Government to the publisher of the *Pouraprabha* dated 19 September, 1930.)

34. (File No. 728/31. See letter from Lt. Col. Pritchard to the Dewan dated 5 December, 1930. The issues were dated 6, 8, 9 and 18 November, 1930. The Government considered certain other articles entitled *Bankruptcy or Shamelessness*, *Lathi* and *Non payment of tax in Gujarat* (8 June, 1930, 28 October, 1930) also as objectionable in tone.

considered the passages as "highly objectionable in tone and substance" and offending against the Regulation of 1926 and called upon the printer and publisher to express "unreserved regret". The Government felt that they could have legally cancelled the newspaper licence without notice.³⁵

On July 1932 the *Malayali* wrote a leading article on the Bombay riots in which the British Indian Government's policy came in for vigorous criticism.³⁶ The Government was of the view that it violated the Regulation of 1926 so far as it tended to excite disaffection against the Government established by law in British India. They demanded from the management unqualified apology on pain of cancellation of the newspaper licence. The Editor consequently expressed regret.³⁷

In November, 1933 the Government proscribed the bringing into Travancore of any copy of the *Sarasan* and the *Navasarasan* as well as the *Bhatan* which was being published at Trippunithura.³⁸

In March, 1933 the Government of Travancore warned some of the newspapers against publishing articles calculated to promote feelings of hatred among the several classes of people in the State. The Government added that they would welcome the expression of public opinion on all important affairs including constitutional reforms. After this general warning the Government on 5 April, 1933 cancelled, in exercise of powers conferred by the Regulation of 1926 the licence of the Anglo-Vernacular newspaper, the *Dasan*. The proceedings against it were taken on account of the publication of an article, entitled the *Knight Errant*⁴⁰ in the issue dated 25th March, 1933. The

35. No. 1/C. 5 dated 1-1-1931. Letter from the Chief Secretary to the Government to the Publisher of *Malayala Rajyam* dated 1 January, 1931.

36. File No. 748/1932.

37. Editorial Notes on 17 August, 1932.

38. File No. 885 C. Customs notification dated 5 November, 1933.

39. File No. 750/1933. The warning was issued to the publishers of the *Malayali* the *Samadarsi*, the *Dasan*, the *Kerala Kesari*, the *Kottayam Patrika* and the *Dakshina Bharati* (No. C. S. 26 dated 1 March, 1933).

40. The article stated that Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer ruffled the placid stream of affairs in Travancore, and manoeuvred the machinery of administration to the advantage of the Nair community and the threatened extinction of the other classes. He was perhaps thinking that the Nairs should be supported for his own 'bread and water' and that the other communities were lotus eaters who could be relegated into the limbo of oblivion with impunity. In view of his isolated position as the Legal and Constitutional Adviser, his interference in the administration of the State was 'dangerous and demoralising' so far as he was threatening the 'abstentionists' whom he had dubbed

Editor, M. M. Varkey, submitted thereon a memorial to the Government requesting the withdrawal of the proceedings taken against the newspaper. Explaining the circumstances under which they came to be taken, he stated that the Ezhava, Muslim and Christian communities had memorialised the Government that the new electoral reforms had barely given them justice in the matter of representation in Legislature". Their attempt having been found futile, they resolved under the leadership of E. J. John on 25 January, 1933 that they would abstain from the elections to the reformed Legislature. From that time onwards the newspapers in

as non-co-operators. It was not clear whether his views were identical with those of the Government of Travancore or whether they were merely personal. It was not clear whether he was advising the Maharaja or the Dewan. What would happen in case of any difference of opinion between Sir Ramaswamy Iyer and the Dewan, the sole constituted Adviser of the Maharaja? Even under the scheme of administration which was called responsive, as distinct from responsible government, was it not necessary that the person offering advice should meet the popular representatives in the Houses of Legislature? The newspaper accused Sir Ramaswamy Iyer of having drained the economic resources of the State and done "more harm to the State than any single individual could do in so short a time or in so devastating a manner". Under the prevalent circumstances, the "feverishly evocant and self-assertive" Adviser was saddling all the blame on the "obnoxiously non interfering and inefficient" Dewan, Mr. Austin and enjoying an invulnerable position himself. The Dewan had little freedom of action, otherwise he would have removed the anomalies of the new constitutional Reforms and it was a pity that he should have "sold away the birth-right of the Dewan of Travancore for a 'mess of pottage'". Retaining Mr. Austin in the woolsack was "like roasting snow in a furnace" and he was sailing between Scylla of public demand and Charybdis of the overriding influence of an Adviser. Sir Ramaswamy Iyer was one who could "pluck a thistle and plant a flower" but in Travancore, according to the article, he plucked the flower and planted the thistle. He was, it was alleged, trying to make the public believe that the moon is made of green cheese. Esconced in his chair behind the curtain, he was so pulling its strings that the "marionettes of office were in constant topsyturvydom", dancing a mad tarantella to his whimsical tunes. The Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims had already expressed at a meeting at Trivandrum their strong resentment at his retention in office against the interests of the State (File No. 751/1933).

41. "To seek to work a reform meant for the people with four fifths of the population opposed to it is to take too grave a risk of failure" (The Hindu dated 3-3-1933).

the State were grouped in two mutually opposing camps,⁴² one advocating representation in proportion to population and the other rejecting that idea. Varkey claimed that the *Dasan* was not influenced by communal bitterness⁴³ though the Government chose to punish it for the same. The statement given by Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer to the Associated Press of India, he added, was highly controversial so far as he had made no distinction between abstention and non-co-operation. It was a fact that the demand of the aggrieved communities could not be satisfied without a proportionate reduction in the share of seats that had fallen, to the Nair community and there was a feeling at the time that but for the influence of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Dewan would have explored the avenues for rendering justice to the various communities and maintaining a balance among them in the Legislature.

The Government's order did not specifically refer to a single article, published in the *Dasan*, as coloured by communal bitterness and no opportunity was given to its Editor to refute the allegation. It was stated that the article, considered offensive, was published only when all hopes of compromise born out of the announcements made by the Dewan were shattered.⁴⁴ It was incomprehensible

42. In the first group the *Dasan* was included while in the second group mention might be made of the *Malayala Rajyam*, the *Malayali* and the *Samadarshi*.

43. M. M. Varkey referred to the journals which savoured of communal bitterness and specifically mentioned an article of the kind that had appeared in the *Samadarshi* on 21 February, 1933. It stated that adequate concessions had already been extended to the unrepresented communities and that the agitation by the Christians of Travancore on the ground of their numerical strength was directed towards the abolition of the Hindu dynasty in the State. This article on the whole was alleged to be an effort to discredit the loyalty and blacken the good name of the Christian community into which the King Emperor and Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy, were dragged to reveal their partiality for that community.

The Editor of the *Samadarshi* who published the article, it was pointed out, was given an appointment by the Government rather than punished.

44. Several meetings had been held and resolutions passed against the retention of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer in service. The reports of such meetings were published in the *Dasan* from about 18 February and the newspaper alleged that he was responsible for the general unrest. It demanded that either he should be made the Dewan invested with responsibility pertaining to that office or his services should be dispensed with. The Government's warning to the paper, as the others, came soon after such comments were published and the first mass meeting of the 'abstentionists' was held at Tiruvalla. On 24 March T. J. Mathew and K. C. Mammen Mappillay

according to the Editor, how the leading article in the *Dasan* could have violated the Regulation of 1926 so far as it was solely concerned with the constitutional position of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer in the public service of the State in relation to that of the Dewan. The Abstention Movement, stated the Editor, was not for adding powers to the Legislature or for undermining the prerogative of the Sovereign; but it was directed solely against the electoral rules passed by the Government; the quarrel was not against the royal gift in the shape of the Regulation, but against the rules under the section framed, not by His Highness the Maharaja but by the Government, "which were iniquitous, depriving certain important communities of their rightful claim to proportionate representation in the Legislature....." Moreover the article in question did not refer to the weakness of the Government as an institution but only to the "apparent incapability of the Dewan, Mr. Austin" as an individual. The participants in the Abstention Movement, Varkey added, did not believe in non-co-operation or resistance to constituted authority or the picketing of the polling booths but only demanded that the powers delegated to the people "by the free will" of the Maharaja should be fairly and proportionately distributed among the different communities of the State. No criticism of the incumbent of the office of the Dewan could be regarded as violating any of the provisions of the Regulation of 1926, much less any criticism, however malicious, of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer who did not have at that time any constitutional position in the administration of the State. As regards the charge that the article in question tended to promote communal ill-feeling, it must be pointed out that any article should be judged⁴⁵ by the impression that it tended to produce on the

had an interview with the Dewan, Mr. Austin, when he apparently assured them that the Government would accept the principle of representation on the basis of population. The same evening, Ramaswamy Iyer arrived in Trivandrum. He met the Dewan next morning, immediately before a conference already proposed by the Dewan for working out a compromise. Strangely enough the Dewan, at the conference, assumed a refractory attitude much against expectations and indicated that the Government would not budge an inch from the position already assumed. This sudden change in his attitude was attributed to the influence exerted on him by Sir Ramaswamy Iyer and the *Dasan* on that assumption published its leader on the same day thus offending the Government. But for Sir Ramaswamy Iyer, the *Dasan* was of the view, the Dewan might have found a solution to the complicated problem. (See Chapter on the Abstention Movement).

45. According to Lord Fitzgerald an article should be read in a "free, fair and liberal" spirit and one should not 'pause upon an objectionable sentence here or a strong word there'. See also the judgment of P. Parameswara Menon in *Janmabhumi* case reported in I. T. L. T.

mind of a man of average intelligence and commonsense. There was no vilification of the Nair community nor the imputation of any corrupt motive to any of them in having secured undue representation in the Legislature at the expense of other classes in the State. A communal colour, it was argued, was sought to be given to the issue by Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer who stated on 30 March, 1933 that the 'abstentionists' "are anxious not so much for an increase in their own representation as for a decrease in the representation of certain other communities who have been for a very long time wielding a great deal of political influence in the State". This statement seems to have been followed by a policy of repression adopted by the Government.⁴⁶ The cancellation of the licence of the *Dasan* was therefore to be looked upon as an integral part of a programme of repression of agitation by the dissatisfied communities. The *Dasan* had always tried to steer clear of any occasion for communal bitterness and in "the case of such a newspaper, conducted on lines so exalted, the Government notice cancelling its licence on charges so ignoble and so alien to its intrinsic policy cannot but be a wanton infringement of its honour and its status, not to speak of the financial loss involved"⁴⁷

Several newspapers, inside and out-side Travancore, were severely critical of the Government's policy⁴⁸, towards the *Dasan*.

46. The District Magistrates of Kottayam, Quilon and Trivandrum prohibited political meetings proposed to be held in sympathy with the Abstention Movement (See also the Chapter on the Abstention Movement).
47. M. M. Varkey's memorial to the Government of Travancore dated 13 May, 1933.
48. On 24 May, 1933 the *Malayala Manorama* commented that though the article in the *Dasan* might make its victims writhe and wriggle it did not contain a single word or phrase that merited punishment by any civilised Government. It did not excite disaffection which, according to authoritative decision, is "disapprobation intensified by hatred and a desire for opposing or retaliatory action". The term "Government" was used in its impersonal sense, as distinguished from any particular set of administrators and so the hatred of the Government did not imply hatred of any of its composing members. Such hatred, if expressed in words, might amount to defamation but it was no sedition. The *Dasan* never called for the subversion of the existing form of Government.

After the cancellation of the licence of the *Desan* the newspaper seems to have re-appeared under the name *Yuvabharati*⁴⁹ on 12 November, 1934, its licence also was cancelled and the licence fee paid by it was forfeited to the Government on the ground that the paper had published articles violating the clauses of the Regulation of 1926.⁵⁰

The Press Regulation of 1926 was amended by a new Regulation passed on 3 June, 1935 so that the newspapers in the State might be brought under stricter control. No newspaper should be printed or published in the State unless a licence was secured by the publisher in his own name in the form and manner prescribed by rules framed by the Government, on a payment of fee not exceeding Rs. 1,000. Any person printing or publishing a newspaper without a licence or printing or publishing one in respect of which the licence had been cancelled would, on conviction by a Magistrate, be liable to a penalty to which he would be liable if he had failed to make the declaration prescribed by the Press Regulation of 1903. If the licence had been obtained before the passing of the Amendment Regulation, the printing and publishing of a newspaper for a period of thirty days from the date of the Amendment would not be punishable on the ground that the licence had not been obtained. After the cancellation of a licence by the Government, no printer or publisher

49. Licence No. 259 dated 27 August, 1932 (File No. 260,34/CS). On 10 November, 1933 the Government wrote to say that they were unable to subscribe for the newspaper (Roc. No. 1267 of 33 Legis). The management stated that they had never requested the Government to subscribe for the paper or sent any copy to them and yet they got the letter which they took as an insult. However a few days before Sir Mohamed Habibulla took charge as the Dewan, the management got another letter from the Publicity Officer to the effect that the Government would like to subscribe (letter No. 18/34/PR. dated 15 February, 1934). The management thought that the attempt was to convince the new Dewan that the Government was fair to all parties and would listen to all sides of the question.

50. One of the offending articles was published on 24 February, 1934. It referred to the anti-Christian policy adopted by the Government. Another article that appeared on 17 March, 1934, warned Sir Mohamed Habibulla that there was a move to invest the Chief Secretary with more powers to create a caste-Hindu Secretariat and make it impossible for the Dewan to interfere in any matter in which he alone could render justice to the oppressed communities. The fusion of the various communities into a political unit, the article stated, would automatically take place as soon as they felt that none would suffer in the exercise of political rights by such fusion. Nationalism as a catchword, commented the article, has no meaning in a country where political power is concentrated in a few.

could get a new one as a matter of course for one year from the date of such cancellation. The Government was empowered to levy licence fee upto a maximum of Rs. 2,500. The publication of obscene matter would entail the cancellation of the licence.

On 12 November, 1935 the licence of the *Kottayam Patrika* a bi-weekly in Malayalam of nine years' standing published by the Catholic press of Kottayam was cancelled.⁵¹ The licence-holder was considered to have offended the provisions of section 5(1)(c) of the Regulation of 1926 in having published an article entitled *Objections against change of religion*. An appeal preferred by the party was dismissed and, on a reference made by the Government, the matter came before the High Court of Travancore. The cause of the cancellation of the licence was alleged to be the defence, in the article published, of the rights of the members of the depressed classes to be converted into Christianity. According to the Government, the act complained of was a strictly judicial one, quite within the ambit of law in force in the State and it was purely a case of an offender against the law paying the penalty prescribed by law and it had nothing to do with his religious persuasion or with the Government's religious policy which, by tradition, had been one of toleration. Subsequently a Full Bench of the High Court of Travancore came to the conclusion that the passages in the article were calculated to promote unhealthy communal feelings.⁵²

In 1938 the Government of Travancore prohibited the circulation in the State, of the newspapers, the *Deepam* and the *Prakasam*, published from the Cochin State.⁵³

Cochin

The Government of Cochin had proclaimed a Press Law as early as 1912 by which all printers, publishers and Editors had to submit the necessary declarations before the lapse of three months from the date of the publication of the newspaper. In 1936 the Government of Cochin passed the Newspaper Regulation in exercise of the Maharaja's special powers. As the State had been free from such penal legislation for a long time, the public protested against

51. Letter No. D. O. C. 25/36 dated 1 April, 1936 from Col. Garstin to Sir Mohamed Habibulla and the latter's reply dated 28 May, 1936. The question had been raised in the House of Commons. The Government of Travancore felt that such questions were inspired by partisan motives and would only encourage the disaffected persons in the State to exploit the apparent interest of some Members of the British Parliament.

52. Letter from the Dewan to Col. Garstin dated 13 October, 1936.

53. The *Deepam* dated 11 August, 1938.

the new Regulation.⁵⁴ On 26 March, the Newspaper Bill initiated by the Government was rejected by the Legislature. Yet the Government enacted it into law.

Malabar

The Indian Press and Unauthorised News-sheets and Newspapers Ordinance had been issued by the Government in 1930. During the course of the Civil Disobedience Movement in the year in response to the call of the All-India Journalists' Association to observe 20 and 21 May as days of protest against the repressive legislation, some of the leading newspapers in Malabar and Cochin abstained from work on both the days. *Ananda Vilasom Press*, Cannanore, where the *Swabhimani*, a Malayalam weekly edited by A. K. Kunhikrishnan Nambiar was being printed, was asked to deposit a security amount of Rs. 1,500, under the Press Ordinance for having published some articles which were not palatable to the Government. It was the first occasion in Malabar when a Press Ordinance was made use of. The press refused to pay the security and was closed on 13 June, 1930. Similarly the Kamal Press, Tellicherry was asked to deposit Rs. 2,000 as security. The *Al-Ameen* of Calicut had to stop publication for some time from 4 August as it also was asked under the Press Ordinance, to pay a prescribed amount as security.

After the Delhi Pact, the Government repealed on 6 March, 1931 some of the repressive ordinances including the Indian Press and Unauthorised News-sheets and Newspaper Ordinance of 1930. On 19 September, 1931 the journalists, newspaper owners and printers of Malabar met under the presidency of Sankara Sastri, Editor of the *Champion*, at Calicut, to protest against the Press Bill pending before the Central Legislative Assembly. It was resolved to form the Malabar Press Association and request the Members of the Assembly to throw out the Bill which had been intended to suppress the freedom of the press in India. The first day of October was observed by all Newspapers as Press Bill Protest Day and none of their issues came out on that day⁵⁵.

54. The *Deepam* dated 25 March, 1936. At Trichur a meeting was held on 22 March and addressed by C. R. Iyyunni who condemned the Government's action; When the Cochin Legislature met on 24 March, T. K. Nair, leader of the Independent Party, introduced an adjournment motion which was disallowed by the Dewan-President. The opposition thereupon staged a walk-out.

55. Under the auspices of the Malabar Press Association, a public meeting was held at Calicut under the presidency of T. V. Sundara Iyer. Rao Sahib C. Kunhirama Menon, Editor of the *Kerala Patrika* moved the resolution of protest.

Early in November, 1931 the police under a warrant issued by the District Magistrate, Malabar, searched the office of the *Yuva-bharatam* published by T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer at Palghat. The paper had published a poem on Guruvayur Temple Entry Satyagraha, composed by T. Subramanian Tirumumb, nearly three months earlier. The poem was alleged to be seditious in character. The original manuscript copy was taken away from the *Sabari Ashram* at Olavakkot after intense search. The *Kamalalaya Press* at Ottapalam where it was printed also was searched. T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer was arrested at Calicut in this connection under section 124 A, as well as K. Narayanan Nair, the printer of the paper and proprietor of the *Kamalalaya Press*. The author himself was arrested at Guruvayur where he was directing the temple entry campaign as Captain. T. Subramanian Tirumumb and T. R. Krishnaswamy Iyer were sentenced in December to rigorous imprisonment for nine months; Narayanan Nair was detained till the rising of the court and the licence of the paper cancelled. Evidently the repression reached the ridiculous limit of penalising even the expression, in literary form of opinion on a subject like social reform.

On 7 January, 1932 a notice was served on all newspapers in Malabar warning them against publishing anything that was likely to help the Civil Disobedience Movement. M. N. Pisharodi was arrested in May for trying to publish an alleged seditious poem which he had entrusted to C. K. Damodaran, Manager of the *Vidya Vilasam Press*, Tellicherry, for printing. During the trial it was made clear that the poem contained nothing seditious and the accused was acquitted. In Palghat, Panku Menon, lawyer, was sentenced, under section 117 and Press Act 18, to rigorous imprisonment for one year and payment of a fine of Rs. 300 or otherwise to imprisonment for a further period of three months.

The *Mahe Chronicle Press*, where the Congress Bulletins were being printed for distribution in Malabar, used to file copies of such notices in the office of the Administrator, Mahe. The Administrator issued orders to T. K. Damodaran, owner of the press, not to distribute the Bulletins which however continued to be distributed regularly in Malabar. Damodaran contended that he was sending for distribution only those copies which had been printed

already as otherwise he would be put to great financial loss. Some of the notices, it was alleged, were distributed in Malabar several days before they were filed with the Administrator of Mahe. A case therefore was taken against the printer but the judge acquitted the accused in March, 1931 stating that there was no need to deposit the copies in Mahe before the distribution of the Bulletins in Malabar.⁵⁶

In July, 1932 T. N. Ramaswamy, the correspondent at Calicut of the *Hindu* of Madras was asked to report himself daily at the police station and submit his reports for scrutiny. The *Hindu* protested to the higher authorities against this unwarranted censorship imposed on journalistic activity.

The Government of Madras served notice on C. H. Kunhappa Nair, Editor and publisher of the *Mathrubhumi* under Ordinance No. 10 of 1932 to deposit Rs. 1,000 as security on or before 1 November, 1932 for a leading article published in its issue dated 17 September. The article was a comment on the Government's refusal to permit Satyabhushan Gupta, a Bengali youth imprisoned in the Punjab, to perform the funeral ceremonies in connection with the demise of his mother. Similar action was taken against the printer of the paper also. *Mathrubhumi* paid the total amount of Rs. 2,000 thus demanded as security but stopped writing leading articles for some time with effect from 1 November, 1932.

The Government prescribed the circulation of a pamphlet, entitled *Yudhakahalam* written by Amsi Narayana Pillai. In August 1933 the weekly, *Yuvadeepam* was asked, under Emergency Powers Ordinance, to furnish a security of Rs. 500 for having published an article on Britain's payment of loan to the U.S.A. in silver, in its issue dated 2 July, 1933. In August, 1935 the *Prabhatham* of Shoranur was asked to give Rs. 2,000 as security. Subsequently the committee of the All India Journalists' Association resolved to observe a hartal on 27 September as a protest against the use of his special powers by the Viceroy in certifying the Criminal Law Amendment Act which had been rejected twice earlier by the Central Legislative Assembly.

On 23 January, 1937 the Government of Madras banned, under the Indian Press Act of 1931 (Section 19) the pledge of complete

56. On 28 May Damodaran was arrested by the police at Azhiyur without a warrant and taken to Badagara. He was charged under Section 18 (1) of the Press Act for alleged distribution of a cyclo-styled copy of a Congress Bulletin in Malabar. He denied the allegation but was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for six months.

independence taken by the Congress and ordered the confiscation of all copies containing it. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru advised that the ban should not be violated though meetings might be held, processions conducted and the tri-colour flag saluted.

The gagging of the press is the normal method of repression adopted by any autocratic Government. A wiser Government would have permitted the free flow of ideas and criticism and shaped the administrative policy in their light. The ideas went underground and worked there with explosive effect. They were thereby rendered more dangerous. The middle class *par excellence* had been leading the movement so far and as it was denied freedom of expression the masses seethed with discontent.

CHAPTER 37

THE CONTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE TO FREEDOM STRUGGLE

The spread of the western system of education widened the outlook of those benefited by it. Their minds were naturally imbued with the ideas of nationalism, freedom and democracy that had exercised profound influence on contemporary Europe. The educated class cultivated a pride in the past and looked forward to a bright future for India. Kerala also, like other parts of India, became subject to a great cultural upheaval and the enlightened section sought to achieve the ideals of national independence, social reform, political democracy and economic regeneration for the benefit of the masses. As literature reflects best the thoughts and emotions of a people, it was natural that gifted men and women who caught the new spirit should strive to awaken the latent national consciousness through their literary output. They sought to give the richest expression to the hopes, aspirations, ideas and ideals of their fellow-men. The writers who influenced and hastened the national movement were eager to break the shackles of tradition and establish a new order of society. The essentials of the past were carefully preserved while progressive ideas were welcomed. The yearning for freedom from the thralldom of British imperialism that originally characterised the classes widened in process of time into that for economic independence as the masses were truly aroused. The conception of "art for the people" began to claim the place of the old idea of "art for its own sake".

The Bilathi Visesham written by K. P. Kesava Menon in 1923 after the completion of his legal studies in England is illustrative of the deep faith of the new generation in the greatness of India, with her cultural glories and spiritual yearning, continued through centuries. He made a stirring call to all patriots to strain every nerve for recapturing the spirit of the past and increasing the material prosperity of the land. His other works of later days written in the same spirit made a deep appeal to the readers as they were the out-pourings of a noble soul, with deep sympathy and tolerance, mellowed through the agonising experiences wrought on him by the drifting currents of destiny.

In Travancore G. Parameswaran Pillai caused a new awakening through his writings. Temperamentally he was against autocratic rule which he resisted for nearly ten years. A forceful journalist and ardent social reformer, he became the Editor of the *Madras*

Standard in 1892 and upheld the cause of the unrepresented communities. His several political writings influenced his contemporaries not a little. K. Ramakrishna Pillai, to whom reference has already been made, was a forceful writer; his attacks on the Palace and the autocracy of the Dewan of Travancore, provoked the royal indignation and he was deported from Travancore in 1910 when he was editing the *Swadesabhimani*. An account of his career and outlook may be found in the *Vyazhavatta Smaranakal* written by his wife Smt. B. Kalyani Amma and in his own *Ente Nadu Kadathal*. He emphasised the social duties of man, moral calibre and fearlessness and with his sharp pen cut through hypocrisy and fought for a clean administration. He was no opportunist, ready to prune his convictions to satisfy the unjust official demands. The *Veera Keralan*, the *Malayali* and the *Dakshina Bharathi* offered a powerful stimulus to critical public opinion. A. Balakrishna Pillai, popularly known by his pen-name, *Kesari* also effectively guided public opinion through a number of articles that he wrote on socio-economic and political problems in the *Samadarsi*.

In the areas of Cochin and Malabar, there were many writers who were highly critical of administrative vagaries. C. Kunhirama Menon, Editor of the *Kerala Pathrika* Calicut, exposed the defects of the Government while Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar was a terror to corrupt officials. The *Mithavadi* and the *Sahodaran* wrote against the evils of caste system, social inequality and autocratic administration. While in Travancore the *Malayala Manorama* vigilantly fought for the recognition of the political claims of unrepresented communities, in Malabar the *Mathrubhumi* constantly endeavoured to make its readers fit for the assumption of political responsibilities. During the dark days of the struggle the *Mathrubhumi* shone as the guiding star of inspiration, carrying out its task as an instrument of social will and national dedication, without fear or favour and without personal or communal considerations. Its mighty traditions steadily built up by K. P. Kesava Menon and P. Ramunni Menon were carried on by succeeding Editors including K. Kelappan. The authorities tried to silence both the papers for some time but could not resist the social will for long. The *Swart* fostered nationalism at Quilon while the *Al Ameen* at Calicut worked to arouse social consciousness. M. Ramunni Nair, a brilliant satirist who wrote a number of articles under his pen name *Sanjayan*, was inspired by Gandhian ideology. He exposed the ridiculous aspects of contemporary society and administration. If the Indian National Congress and Gandhiji were to fall apart, said he, he would rather follow the footsteps of Gandhiji than those of the former.

The national songs composed by poets and others from time to time inspired the people, particularly the Satyagrahi

volunteers, not a little. As they marched with the tricolour flag in hand, picketed the liquor shops and foreign-cloth shops or engaged themselves in spinning in defiance of authority, they used to sing the flag salutation songs composed by K. C. N. Vazhunnavar and Vallathol Narayana Menon. The famous Marching Song, *Varika Varika Sahajare* was composed by Amsi Narayana Pillai, the author of many such inspiring national songs. Kuttamath Kunniyur Kunjukrishna Kurup and T. R. Krishna Swamy Iyer also composed a number of national songs which stirred the hearts of the participants and the onlookers.

The novel, *Aphante Makal* written by M. Bhavathrathan Nambudiripad and the drama, *Atukkalayil Ninnu Arangattekk* composed by V. T. Bhattatiripad effected revolutionary social changes, particularly in the conservative Nambudiri community, and awakened the masses from their slumber. The drama, *Marakkutakkullile Mahanarakam* written by M. R. Bhattatiripad and that entitled, *Ritumati* written by M. P. Bhattatiripad were equally profound in the message that they were intended to convey. The novel *Indulekha* written by O. Chandu Menon ridiculed the forced marriage of Nair women to the Nambudiris. Malayalam poetry, formerly confined to a limited sphere, took a new turn under the western influence. The advent of lyric poetry was one of the main results of the changed outlook. Pallath Raman, in his poems, attacked the caste system and pleaded for raising the standard of life of the poor. He dwelt on Labour, on the workman's hammer that would make anklets to be worn by the damsel of life. K. P. Karuppan also wrote poems of great social importance.

The three great poets of modern Kerala, N. Kumaran Asan, Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer and Vallathol Narayana Menon have made invaluable contribution to social uplift and the success of the national movement. They produced exquisite poetry bearing on social political economic and cultural themes. Kumaran Asan came under the influence of Sri Narayana Guru who believed in one caste, one religion and one god. His mind was oppressed by the miserable plight of the down-trodden communities. He decried through his poems the caste restrictions and untouchability and was much grieved about the political slavery of India. His *Chandala Bhikshuki*, *Duravastha* and other poems touched and melted the contemporary conservative *savarna* mind and brought about a radical change in social outlook.

Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer produced several lyrics bearing on social uplift and the one-ness of humanity. The sight of a tied *palaya* girl with a heavy grass bundle on her head made him think that her social position was beneath even that of grass. He exhorted the youth to remember that while life is a struggle, only

righteous fight for human welfare is desirable and that caste differences should not be a barrier to a sense of fraternity. Love hails for ever, he sang, and the different elements in the universe are intended to help one another; the doors of universal love can be opened only by the key of universal love and those who keep themselves aloof, on the plea of caste distinctions and religious prejudices, are sinners. Parameswara Iyer's poems are of little political import but their social content exercised a great amount of influence on his generation.

Vallathol Narayana Menon appeared on the literary firmament after the first World War when the people of India concentrated their attention on socio-political problems and wanted to free literature from reactionary tradition. Vallathol did not look at the Indian national movement as confined to a few constitutional or political changes but as closely connected with the spiritual resurgence of, and the cultural values cherished by, India for ages. True nationalist literature would survive the attainment of freedom as it would have permanent and fundamental values. He was no political worker but his was a voice imbued with deep sincerity that one could ill afford to ignore. Just as India's spiritual renaissance had expressed itself in regional languages through Namadeva, Kabir and other great men, so too her national sentiment and love of freedom came to be reflected mainly through the great poets, Rabindranath Tagore, Bharati, Vallathol and others. In their respective regions they found it impossible to cut themselves aloof from the tidal wave of nationalism. Vallathol grew with the times and his poetic genius possessed several facets. He sympathised with the oppressed and the downtrodden, attacked the rigid caste system and untouchability and often expressed his righteous indignation against tyranny of any kind. He dwelt on the toiler in the soil and tried to renovate the social life in rural areas.

Vallathol cherished deep admiration for Dadabhai Naoroji and Lokamanya Tilak and wrote poems on them. He felt remorse at the humiliating experiences of his countrymen abroad and felt ashamed of himself for his own indifference towards his motherland. His poem *kalam mari* perhaps inaugurated the nationalist phase of his literary efforts. He accepted Gandhiji as his preceptor and his deep disappointment in not being able to meet and converse with him at Vaikom in 1925 found expression in his poem, *papa mochanam*. The popularity of his poem on Gandhiji entitled *Ente Gurunathan* is unrivalled. He found in Gandhiji the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the *dharmarakshopaya* of Sri Krishna, the *ahimsa* of the Buddha, the intellect of Sankara, the compassion of Rati Deva the truthfulness of Harischandra and the steadfastness of Muhammad. Only a land, he sang, that has produced the Gita can give birth to a *Karma yogin* of Gandhiji's calibre; only in the land between the

Himalayas and the Vindhyan ranges can be found a lion that has practised self-restraint; only in a region washed by the Ganga can a *Kalpaka* tree producing auspiciousness thrive. Gandhiji's slender feet were enough, according to the poet, to trample upon the Kaliyan's hood of British imperialism.

Vallathol sang the glory of the Charka which he looked upon as *Sri Chakra* itself that would drive away poverty. His flag-salutation poem, *pora pora*, has an undying emotional appeal. It is too popular in Kerala to require reproduction here. The lines beginning with *Vaname, gaganame* extol unfettered freedom. He wondered how in this land where a fisher-woman gave birth to the foremost *Brahmarshi*, the inter-mingling of men could ever be construed as *adharma*. His poem *Ningal tan pokku vipareetamakola*, seems to have been against the Swarajist demand for Council entry while the poem *vaisasam porum porum* was intended to remove all obstacles in the path to freedom. He also wrote about the fallen lot of women. He felt sad about the economic misery of the common man in India; death is common, says he, but being burnt up by hunger can happen only in the crematorium of our unhappy land where the corpses of slaves accumulate. He was a humanist to the core. His love of the country was infinite; on hearing the name of India, the mind is to be filled with honour, he adds, and on hearing the name of Kerala the blood should bubble in one's veins. On the whole, Vallathol's poems constituted a perennial source of inspiration to all his countrymen and, in particular, to the active nationalist workers. His deep sympathy and sense of human fellowship, nationalism and optimism made him the literary harbinger of a new age during a critical phase in India's struggle for freedom.

Following the lead of Vallathol, a number of young poets also began to write under the inspiration of the spirit of nationalism. K. Ramunni Menon, V. Kesavan Unnithan and Vennikulam Gopala Kurup were some of them. It was the time when the cult of non-violence and faith in Gandhiji had been influencing literary output throughout India. P. Kunhiraman Nair naturally caught the spirit of the times, and wrote poems on freedom and mother-land, apart from practically forming a *Desha Seva Sangham* in 1930 and doing constructive work. G. Sankara Kurup, with his nationalist fervour and progressive ideas gave a new horizon and added new values to the Malayalam literature.

It is not possible here to refer to all the other thinkers and writers in Kerala who have influenced the nationalist movement in their own way. Quite effective had been their contribution and quite sincere had been their clarion call. The new enthusiasm gushed forth through several openings and engulfed the whole land.

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